CHRIST KRISHNA and YOU

Swami VENKATESANANDA

"Only a close study and contemplation of the saying of Jesus in Mark II, 17 enables you to understand the Bhagavad Gita better."

"I study the Holy Bible. I study the Bhagavad Gita. I cannot find a single contradictory thought."

"Why do we look upon Christ, Krishna, Buddha as some kind of superior person? For a very clever reason-that thereby we escape the necessity to follow his teaching."

"Except your parents, you choose everything else in life-your teacher, Guru, religion, the way you worship God-everything is the ego's own choice."

"There is a distinction between the word of God and the word of man. In the word of God there is no doubt; in the word of man there is always doubt."

"Lucifer means 'the Light'. He disobeyed God and from that moment he bacame known as Satan. In view of this definition almost no-one is going to disqualify from being called Satan."

CHRIST

KRISHNA

and

YOU

Swami VENKATESANANDA

In collaboration with Father Terence Melvin O.S.M.

and Swami Hamsa

CHILTERN YOGA FOUNDATION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful thanks are offered to:

Fr. Terence Melvin, O.S.M. for his Preface and enlightening commentary.

Dr. S. Rose and Mrs. Rose for their generous offering.

Swami Hamsa for editing.

Swami Sushila for invaluable help and guidance in preparation of the manuscript.

W. Zineski and M. Styles for overseeing the whole publication.

First printing 1983

2,500 copies

Published by:

The Chiltern Yoga Foundation

1029 Hyde Street, #6

San Francisco, California 94109

Typeset by Cragmont Publications

Printed by Banta Company

ISBN 0-9612762-0-7

Library of Congress Catalog Number 83-073150

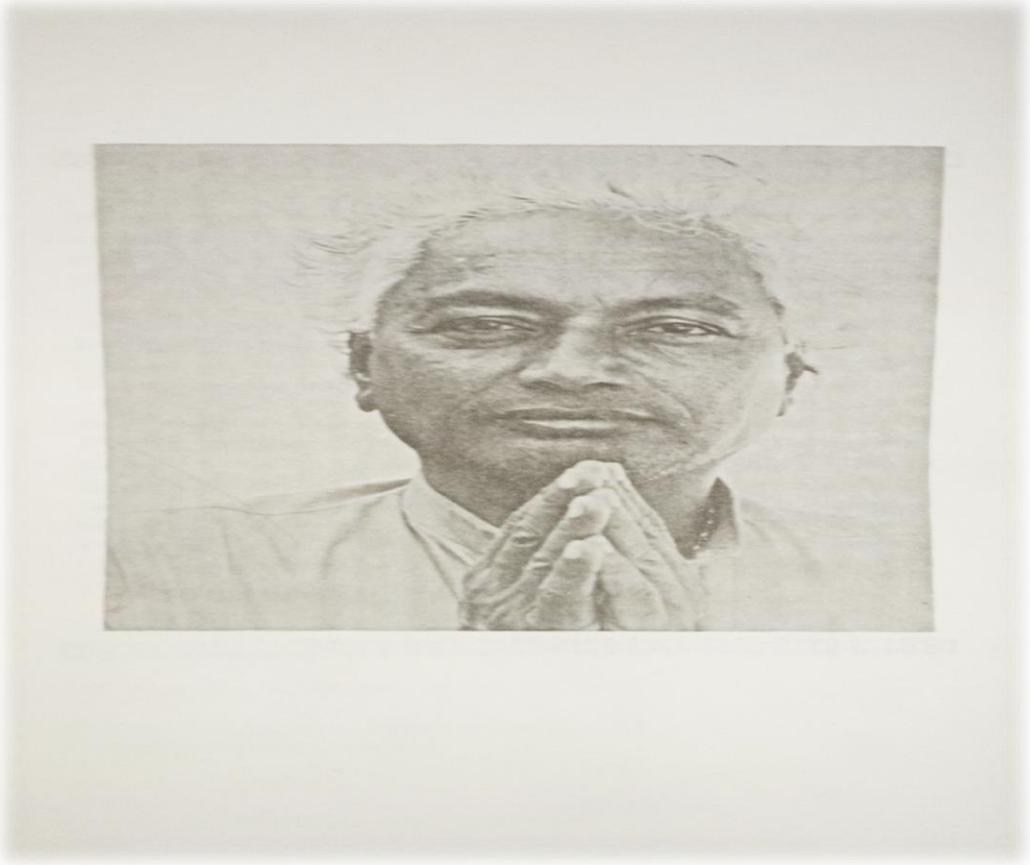
Know this my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not az doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.

If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and

widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

(James I, 19-27)



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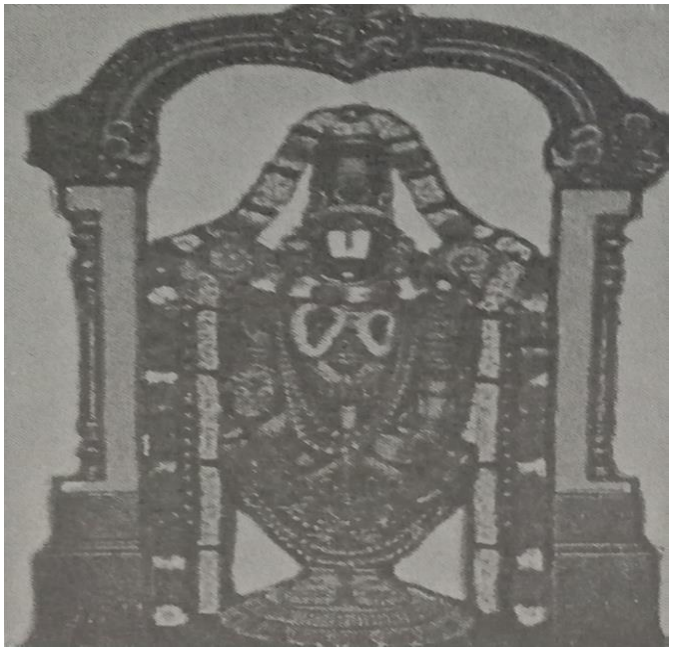

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

Lord Venkatesa-whose very name implies "He who destroys our sins and sinful tendencies."

To Gurudev Swami Sivananda-his life was an illustration of the tenets of Yoga and the teachings of Lord Jesus.

To a dear brother Mr. W. Zineski who prompted these thoughts.

Preface

Western Society as we know it is changing. We live in a time of aggravated doubt and uncertainty. Prospects for the future look none too promising with the Damoclean sword of nuclear war hanging over our heads. With rapid increases in technology, familiar patterns of relating are changing. The significant institutions political, economic and social no longer appear to provide relevant answers for the complexity of issues which now face us. Even the established Christian religions are faced with disenchantment and lack of interest by their members. Faced now with the limitations of these structures and institutions, there is an evident air of resigned skepticism, cynicism, even despair.

This cracking is raising important questions of meaning in peoples' lives. The disenchantment with traditional meaning-making systems, particularly the Christian Church, is promoting a sense of alienation and a lack of commitment. However, the significant rise in interest over recent years in the occult, meditation and the Eastern Religious Traditions, would indicate that people have not abandoned the spiritual quest altogether. There is still the desire for the Transcendent. While this is a challenge to traditional Western religious practices, it may be God's providence at work in our time. A challenge for the 80's will be to formulate new meanings and this may come through a meeting of the West and the East.

An important consideration, is how are we in the Christian tradition to do this? There is a very real danger that the crisis as it is experienced will be met with closed minds. There are already indications of closing ranks, of a desire to return to the old and familiar patterns, not only within the Church but in all spheres of life.

Recently, the University Campus where I work, was visited by a group of enthusiastic young Christians from the U.S.A. They had a message "Good News" - which they wanted to share. They had discovered Jesus

and he had transformed their lives. We too, if we believed and were baptized in the Spirit, would be saved and come to the joy of knowing Jesus Christ.

While one admired their enthusiasm, sincerity and energy, there was something unsettling about their approach. Any questioning was met with a barrage of quotations from St. Paul, telling us what we should or should not do. There was no opportunity given for discussion about the possible meaning of these quotations. For the unwary, such meetings degenerated into scriptural ping pong! Their attitude to those who would not come around to their way of thinking, was one of pity, with hinted warnings of impending doom and no salvation. I couldn't help but think of the old cry: "Outside the Church there is no salvation!"

This return to a fundamentalist understanding of Christianity is a familiar and recognizable response to crisis or doubt. What they had discovered was not necessarily the spirit of Jesus, but security and equilibrium. This is clung to with such tenacity that everything which seems remotely at odds with what they believe, is rejected as bad. Initially this "high" of discovering Jesus sustains the unwary, but eventually it entraps them in intolerance or they become disillusioned completely.

Apart from this danger of fundamentalism, there is a confusion of Faith with the act of faith or the belief system. This is the difficulty of any approach which understands faith merely as orthodoxy - where the formulation, the doctrine is seen as embracing the totality of what is revealed: faith is linked with correct words properly formulated. This has been very much the approach of the Orthodox and Catholic Traditions, which understood faith to be centered almost exclusively on the intellectual dimension of the person. The formulation is in a sense intrinsic to faith itself. So one cannot have faith if it doesn't adhere to a definite doctrine. These doctrinal affirmations while necessary and important, cannot contain the transcendent mystery of

faith. Not only do the mysteries of faith transcend the power of the human intellect, the very expression of what is revealed is historically and culturally bound. An orthodox approach would only be viable in a specific and homogeneous world.

While the danger is dogmatism, moralism and perfectionism can also ensnare us. This stems from an identification of faith with orthopoiesis. It insists on the moral character of the religious act. The emphasis here being on doing rather than saying. Protestant Reformation took this option when it recognized that faith had a practical and willed element. "Faith without works is dead." (Jas. 2/17). However, to reduce faith to orthopoiesis is to destroy the very foundation of religion which claims to be more than perfectionism. Just as faith can be expressed in more than one orthodox formulation, so too it can be manifest in differing ethical behavior. Again, while still recognizing the validity and importance of both these instances of faith, the challenge is to be attentive to the dangers of expecting to contain faith in one or the other exclusively, which those in need of security and equilibrium are prone to do.

If we can accept the distinction between faith and act of faith (belief), we might ask what is faith? Acknowledging that it is not a matter of simply having the "right" words or the "correct" moral deportment, we can see that we don't have faith as we have money, property, friends. Rather, as A. Dulles says in Faith that does Justice: "We live by faith and from faith; it is always underneath or above, but like any horizon of reality always just beyond our grasp."

Faith is a gift universally given to all humanity. It is primal. Faith is the human universal, constitutive of the human person. It unites us to our foundation, to the cosmos. It gives us the capacity to deny or affirm objects of belief. Hence, it even allows the atheist to deny there is a God. It is that disposition within us that allows us to be open to being, to new possibilities, to the transcendent.

This constitutive disposition is realized in praxis. The person being a doer, one who acts, praxis is the actualizing of that gift from God. It is that human activity which modifies and fashions not only the person's exterior existence, but also the interior dimensions of their life. Praxis is critical reflective ethical activity which actualizes our capacity of faith, and in the context of my past and present, it seeks to answer, "What is God calling me to become?" R. Panikkar says in Myth, Faith and Hermeneu- tics: "Every action that leads to the perfection of man in his concrete existential situation, every action that leads man to his realization is authentic praxis, way to salvation." And again, "if the end of Man is to become God, he is divinized by orthopraxis." Faith then as orthopraxis, is that activity that opens us up to the possibility of perfection permitting us to attain what we are not yet; viz. unity with God. "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5/48).

To conceive of faith in this way, highlights the dangers of security and equilibrium in our lives to opt for such is to choose death. As the prophet Isaiah says: "If you do not believe, you will not exist" (Is. 7/9). Characteristic of this faith stance is that restlessness of heart which Augustine says "is restless until it rests in Thee." This is the stuff growth is made of. This faith requires courage, the courage to be (Tillich). It engages the entire person both on affective and intellectual dimensions. It demands active involvement; it asks us to make choices; it recognizes that it is not automatic progress along the way. We must bring our own powers of critical reflectiveness to our situation. It recognizes the centrality of the death-resurrection motif of Christianity. The faith journey is one of change, of taking risks, of growth. Without the "letting go," there can be no movement, no newness. Mark tells us in his Gospel that those who followed Jesus were full of amazement and fear (Mark 10/32). At the empty tomb strangely we find the same response (Mark 16/8). Why? What they thought had ended with death was beginning again. The end of praxis

is more praxis, in an ever upward or inward spiral toward our goal, whatever we might envisage that to be.

This concept of faith, moreover, opens us up to the awareness that, as the Second Vatican Council pointed out: "All people form in community, because all stem from the same stock God created to people the entire Earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God." (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, No. 1) Built into this awareness of a common faith journey, but with a plurality of expressions is the call to dialogue. Pluralism is a fact of our age, significantly recognized by the Church in her Documents: "Largely because of more frequent contacts with each other, men have become aware of pluralism and indeed have come to see it as the hallmark of our age." (On Dialogue with Unbelievers, 1968). It goes on to state that true pluralism is impossible unless people and communities of different origins and cultures undertake dialogue together. This dialogue relies on mutual relationships between the participants and with each party acknowledg- ing the dignity and work of the other. Dialogue can help increase understanding of truths of faith which are imperfectly grasped by believers. Recognizing that not everything that Christians accept comes from revelation, dialogue can help shed light on what comes from revelation and what comes from elsewhere. Within the Christian tradition we can hardly ignore the advances which the Ecumenical Movement has made. A new spirit of collaboration and co-operation has emerged. This is a certain indication of God's presence manifesting itself.

A new call to dialogue which is rapidly being felt, is that with great religious traditions of the East. The present cracking we are experiencing in the West is adding strength to this. As I have already mentioned, one of the consequences of disillusionment, especially with Christianity, has been the significant rise in interest in the East.

People are discovering in these teachings something which Christianity has been unable to provide.

The indications are that the challenge for the 80's is the meeting of the traditions of the East and West. As our planet grows smaller, there is an ever-increasing awareness of one another. A cursory investigation of both shows that together they provide a complementarity and wholeness in understanding the spiritual life journey. The intellectual West needs the intuitive East; the feminine East needs the masculine West; the active West needs the contemplative East. Panikkar refers to this need when speaking of the fundamental option taken by East and West in their development India decided in favor of the Spirit, while the West opted for the Word. The consequences are far-reaching:

"The Word is powerful, is articulate, leads to clarity and distinction, to science and technology, is sure of itself once it has assumed a critical stance. The Word organizes, commands, expresses and even cries. The Spirit is helpless outside its inner realm, it is unstructured and insecure for it blows now one way, now another, in total freedom that amounts to disorientation and anarchy; the Spirit feels, is concerned, contemplates and is easily satisfied at the price of being blind to externals; it is joyful and happy. Perhaps the time has come when the twins will have to meet if our world is to survive."

I am hopeful that in some small measure this book Christ, Krishna and You will contribute to this endeavor. The Fathers of the Vatican Council have urged us to look to what unites us with other people, rather than what divides. If we can break through the crust of religiosity and reaction that so often surrounds our faith and return to the core issues of what we believe, we may discover that there is more that unites us than we imagine. We are pilgrims and you never know who or what will cross our path. I am thankful for the surprise of Swami Venkatesananda, a man of evident wisdom and insight, of

humor and sensitivity. I am thankful too for the invitation and opportunity to contribute in this small way.

I am sure if we seek we will find and He, by the power at work within us, is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. And I pray with Paul to the Father, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant us to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3/14-19)

Perth, W.A.

August, 1982

Father Terence Melvin O.S.M.

Introduction

Once a Christian girl asked me, "Why do you Hindus worship so many gods, whereas we worship only One God?" I replied with a question "How many Gods are there?" She said, "Only One." "Then why do you say, 'my God' and 'your God'?"

Those of us who believe in the One God know that, albeit in various ways and forms, everyone worships Him alone. We may start to climb a mountain from any place we like, but the higher we get the closer we get to each other.

Only God can restore this understanding - and He does, by periodically manifesting Himself on this earth plane. Two such manifestations rule the hearts of all humanity today - Krishna and Christ. Are they two? Do not even the names sound similar? And their lives ... and their teachings?

Christ was born in the manger; Krishna in a prison.

Both were whisked away to a far-off place, immediately after nativity. The former, for fear of Herod; the latter, for fear of Kamsa both of whom were the rulers of the country.

Both of them sought early in their lives to effect far-reaching reform in the modes of worship.

Both of them had control over the elements.

Jesus multiplied loaves and fish (Mark VIII, 1-9); Krishna multiplied calves and cowherds.

Jesus "straightened" an infirm woman (Luke XIII, 10ff); Krishna cured Kubja in the same way.

Jesus sought to be baptized by John (Matt. III, 13-17); Krishna sought to be taught by Sandeepany.

Jesus washed the feet of his own disciples (John XIII, 3ff) as did Krishna.4

Both of them exalted the power of faith Christ said faith can move mountains, and Krishna demonstrated it by lifting a mountain with His little finger.

Both of them taught wonderful ethical and spiritual lessons. The Sermon on the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita contain the same gems of Truth.

Both of them were glorified by some as God and ridiculed by others.

Both of them were killed.

Both of them blessed their tormentors. Christ forgave them; Krishna insisted that his killer should go to heaven first.

Even the legend which says that Lord Krishna married over sixteen thousand wives might mean no more than this: every Christian nun is considered the bride of Christ, and it is possible that even at the time the biography was written down, there were over sixteen thousand of them.

Are they two or one? Historians charm us with well-reasoned arguments to prove Christ lived two thousand years ago, and Krishna nearly four or five thousand years ago. In prehistoric calculations, thousands of years are but hours in contemporary history! Could it be that Christ lived a little earlier and Krishna a little later than at present believed? Could it be then, that we are talking about the same Person, some calling Him Christ and others Krishna?

There is a missing period in the life of Christ. Some endeavor to fill it by surmising that He must have travelled East. It is just as possible that some of the stories connected with Krishna's early life could also have been "fillers" to link up over the missing period.

Any guess is hazardous. But if He reveals the Truth, may it not unite us all Hindu and Christian in the realization that we are all truly brothers and sisters, worshipping the same Divinity?

Let us look at the life and teachings of Christ and Krishna with our eye of intuition so we may obtain as much inspiration from them as possible. In the East they do not pronounce the word Christ as we do in English, but it sounds something like "Hrista." This word in Sanskrit means literally, one who dwells in the heart. In India Jesus is called Isha-Mashi; Isha in Sanskrit means Lord, God.

Krishna was born in prison and Christ in a manger. Perhaps the texts inform us that when the Divine takes birth it need not be under extraordinary circumstances, it could be in a very humble style. God can incarnate Himself in the normal way as any other baby is born.

The criterion that determines who an "avatara" is is not supernatural appearance or disappearance, but the power to establish righteousness. Hence we regard the human Rama as an avatara and not the "ten-headed," powerful and "superhuman" Ravana as described in Ramayana. In this light Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Zarathustra, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed and Mahavira, are all avataras of God.

We admit that the Son of God is God, the son of a lion is a lion. The messenger sent by light is light only.

Since this avatara effectively veils Himself with His own maya, God's illusory power, He may behave as God or man. He may proclaim His divinity or hide it. If He upholds righteousness, He is God.

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1. The Book of God translation of the Srimad Bhagavatam by Swami Venkatesananda, reading for August 17.

2. Ibid., reading for September 17.

3. Ibid., reading for September 20.

4. Ibid.

Part I

YOGA AND CHRISTIANITY

The Dawn

If this is the dawn of a New Era of religious unity and understanding, then everyone in the world should join hands and usher in that era. There is no doubt about that. We cannot afford to talk of differences.

In fact, what is the difference, I ask, between Christ and Krishna - the two names even sound alike. The people who talk of difference are hypocrites, not religious men. If God Himself came down to this earth and proclaimed the unity of religions, then these people would go away from the religious fold and seek differences elsewhere. If the doors of religion were closed, they would seek expression in other fields of human activity.

Instead of worrying our little heads over the differences that exist among the religions, we really ought to be filled with wonder, that though the various Prophets lived in different countries and climes, their fundamental teaching, their basic doctrines were the same.

In finding the common meeting ground we may promote better understanding and disabuse ourselves of any bias or prejudice that may linger in our hearts.

I study the Holy Bible. I study the Bhagavad Gita. I cannot find a single contradictory thought. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you" says the Lord. The thought is echoed in the Bhagavad Gita: "Whoever constantly thinks of Me, I attend to his needs." Where is the Kingdom of God, so that we may seek after that? "The Kingdom is within you" says the Lord (ref. Luke XVII, 21). Says the Gita: "God is seated in the hearts of all beings." "Lo, I am with you always," says the Lord in the Holy Bible (Matt. XXVIII, 20). Where is the difference?

Therefore to find not the difference but the relationship between Yoga and Christianity, we must have some understanding of Yoga and some of Christianity. Yoga is bringing about the total integration, the

complete harmony which is exclusive of nothing in the world. Christianity, to my knowledge, is understanding the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is easy if we also believe that Jesus Christ is an incarnated Divinity. Why? For the simple reason that the Divine is aware of Himself, God is aware of Himself. God being Consciousness, God is all the time aware of Himself. You and I are not aware of ourselves. You and I are aware of what we call "objects." Awareness has both these potentialities: awareness is aware of the other, an object; and awareness, being awareness, is aware of itself. In the case of the Divine, it is awareness in both senses of the word. The Divine is aware of itself and aware of everything else. In our case, we are so busy trying to understand the object, that we ignore the Divine in us and we remain ignorant. This is the difference between the human and the Divine. Ultimately, it is possible for the human being to come into this full and total awareness.

There is a beautiful passage in the Gospel according to St John (XIV, 12) where Jesus says: "He who believes in me" (which is later qualified to mean "if you do what I say") "will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do." This is a beautiful interpretation. It shows that this self-awareness is not the monopoly of even Divine Beings. The difference between Divine Beings or Incarnations and human beings is not only of degree but also of direction. The Divine is descending and we are ascending, and if we do it with grace, with understanding, self- awareness, then we also will get there. Christianity is understanding this message and regaining this self-awareness in which Jesus taught, spoke, healed, blessed.

How do we enter into this spirit? How do we unveil the spirit within each of us so that the Christ-consciousness, Christ experience, may be yours and mine; so that the ego, the little "I" and "me", the limited personality will become completely offered to Christ, so that it becomes one with Christ-consciousness? This is the question that the yogi asks himself.

My Guru Swami Sivananda used to say that Yoga does not interfere with your religious faith or belief. Why? For the simple reason that it is all-inclusive. Yoga being all-inclusive, excludes nothing and cannot possibly interfere with anyone's religion. He used to say that the practice of Yoga makes the Christian a better Christian; the Hindu a better Hindu; the Buddhist a better Buddhist; even the lawyer a better lawyer. Self-knowledge does not interfere with your life style. Life is something to meditate on. In that sense, Yoga is not so much a philosophy as a technique. It is very well to sit here and talk about, "I and the Father are One," or "Father, Thy Will be Done," but how do you know what that will is? How do you even know what it is to be a Christian?

The previous Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Michael Ramsey) asked me: "If my religion, my faith, my practices, my approach to God and all this, leads me there, would you still want me to practice Yoga?" I said: "You are a yogi. You are using different terminology and that's not important." Here, one would merely want to investigate with the other person, if he is willing and open, the phenomenon of faith: Are you merely blindly accepting that which someone else told you as the truth, or is your Spirit, the heart of Jesus, awake in you? Are you investigating the teaching as Jesus himself did in His own time? Are you blindly clinging to a tradition, which will only throw you into the same group of hypocrites whom Jesus did not spare in his mission, or are you alive to the Spirit of religion as opposed to the tradition or form of religion? Then you are alive; you are a yogi.

Once I was in New Zealand at a church gathering and a young man walked up to me and said: "Swami do you believe in Jesus Christ?" And I said, "Yes." "And you know that Jesus said, 'Follow Me'?" I said, "Yes, I know that he said, 'Follow Me'." "Well, why don't you follow him?" said the young man. "What does it mean, Sir?" He said, "Come and join us." I said, "I am sorry, Jesus said 'Follow Me' not you."

I must find Christ-consciousness. Again and again we are admonished in the Bible, "Why do you call me 'Lord Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke VI, 46) and "You must do the will of God" (Ref. Matt. VII, 21).

"I am the way, and the truth and the life." (John XIV, 6) In that statement there is something fantastically beautiful. When I say "I am a human being," the "I" is equal to the human being. It is a simple equation. And when Jesus says: "I am the Way," it means your spiritual path is Christ-consciousness. "The Way" is the way that you follow. The ultimate realization of truth or self-awareness is Christ. Do not take "Me" to be the human personality, for "I am the Truth." Whether you turn to it or not, "I am the Light." Look for Him there, instead of trying to manipulate your life, instead of trying to do some kind of cosmetic, superficial discipline. You know what cosmetic discipline means? Any kind of discipline that can be washed out: it is shallow, vain. And discipline that does not stand the test of life itself is useless. So why do you look for this truth? Where do you look for this God? Where do you look for this Divinity and how do you find your path?

Jesus says: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." Instead of assuming that your life is a good or bad life or an in-between life, go right down into yourself and see what life means. What is life? Not what is the meaning of the word "life." Not, "What is the purpose of life?" What is life itself? Or what are you when you are fast asleep and the mind does not function, thoughts do not flow, but life continues? Life is Christ. And no-one comes to the Father but through this door (ref. John XIV,6). Allowed this Self-knowledge and understanding, the life itself enters the kingdom of God. There is no Self-realization, no salvation, no liberation. It is easy, but because of our unwillingness to face the truth directly, we miss this extremely simple truth. The truth is hidden in life itself and that life is Divine. It is granted to us by the Divine, it is the Divine.

Somehow in our anxiety to make something else of that life, we run away from it. And therefore Jesus in his beautiful Sermon on the Mount says "Do not be anxious about anything" (ref. Matt. VI, 25). Drop all anxieties and then allow life to flow on. Whatever that anxiety may be, drop it, because anxiety is positive proof that you have moved away from the center. When you dwell in the center, there is no anxiety. How do you know? When you are fast asleep there is no anxiety. What more do you want?

In Sanskrit the word for deep sleep (svapiti) literally means "returning to the Self." We are not talking about dreams and nightmares and so on. We are talking about profound deep sleep where there is no thought movement, neither in the form of the waking-state consciousness nor even dreams. There you are close to the Self- you are close to God. Why? Because there is peace, joy, delight and regeneration. You come out of that sleep completely, totally refreshed without having done anything. My Guru used to say, "Think of sleep, you do not take any injection, you do not take any vitamins and tonics. Even here, five minutes later you are fresh." How is it possible? You are close to your own Self, you are close to God. In that state there is peace, joy, rejuvenation and most important of all, there is absolutely no fear or anxiety.

"Is it possible," we ask, "to live in that state?" What are you doing when you are asleep? You are doing nothing. Sleep is "doing you," if that makes any sense. When it leaves, you can get up. Even the alarm clock only pushes that sleep away- does not wake you up. Only when that sleep is pushed away can you wake up. You are totally at the mercy of sleep, at the mercy of God. You tell yourself: "We are so frightened of this and that, of bugs and diseases, all sorts of crazy things." But when you are fast asleep this whole city might cave in ... did you ever think of that?

Can we live our whole life in a state of wholeness and total harmony, the state of non-dualism that is characteristic of deep sleep without

sleeping? Can this Divine state prevail? This is the serious question that both the yogi and the inquiring Christian seek to resolve.

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Union

About twelve years ago, a good Christian who was a yoga student told me with a smile on his face: "You know, my priest cautioned me against learning Yoga. He says it is the teaching of the devil." My response was simple: "Not being acquainted with the devil I don't know what his teachings are! But I can tell you what Yoga is and what it is not. That is quite simple."

Then there is the attitude that since Yoga is not mentioned in the Gospels we should not look at the teachings. Jet planes and motor cars are not mentioned in the Gospels. But we use them! So one has to understand the whole concept more deeply and see if there is anything in the teaching that positively militates against the religion one believes in.

In order to do that, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what is meant by the word "religion." It is a tragedy too deep for tears and probably it moves you as much as it moves me even to think that in the name of religion we have promoted numerous conflicts. In the name of religion. Is it possible for us to understand what the word religion means? It is interesting to see that Dr. Capra (the author of The Tao of Physics, and now in another volume, The Turning Point) suggests that religion is "to bind firmly" religare. That is what the word "Yoga" also means. One is Latin and the other is Sanskrit. So what! And of course there is the other suggestion that I will immediately dismiss as irrelevant: that when Jesus referred to "My yoke," "My yoke is

easy..." (Matt. XI, 29-30) they say he was referring to his yoga may be, may not be. Religion is to bind firmly, or, as Yoga implies, to link, to unite, to yoke, two factors together. What these two factors are is not made explicit in the word "religion" or "yoga."

Now we can contemplate the teaching of the Gospels:

"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand" said Jesus. (Luke VIII, 10) Why speak in parables? Why don't you be explicit? For the simple reason, as we shall go into in greater detail as we go along with this discussion, that an immature mind might misinterpret a teaching if it becomes too explicit. Therefore there is a need to allow this maturity to take place and for each one of us to discover the truth. As the yogi would say: the vessel must be prepared before the nectar can be poured into it. Otherwise you will spoil it. Therefore these things were not made explicit.

(On this point, Father Terence comments: "Figurative language, that is the language of love, demands that a certain relationship be established between the speaker and hearer in order for it to be understood. Figurative language has a force more binding than direct speech - it requires that the hearer be ready to enter into a special relationship with the speaker. Jesus speaks about God in a way that reaches hearers who will permit themselves to become involved and who learn how to know the reality which is contained in metaphor by association with Jesus and through discipleship. The parable then is incomprehensible to those with hardened hearts and not in that close and open relationship with Jesus. The context for these sayings about parables is the blindness of the professors of religion and even of Jesus' own family and disciples. (Mark VIII, 17ff)")

What is religion? They said, "binding two things firmly together." What is Yoga? "To unite two things firmly together" - unite means two. What

are those two factors, or many factors? They ask: "Why do you want everything to be made explicit? Why don't you try to work, at least as hard as the teacher?" The problem of the majority of people who call themselves religious is that they are too lazy to work at it. We love to go to somebody and say, "Please tell me what to do." If you are going to do it, find out how you are going to do it. You cannot do a thing precisely the way that someone else does it - impossible.

Having heard the teaching, contemplate and find out how you can do it, how you can comprehend it, and in that process you may get a clearer idea of what the teaching itself is. This is the reason why parables, stories and legends are used. If one doesn't understand this process you will take the letter as more important than the spirit and run into the difficulty which Jesus pointed out: "The letter killeth the spirit" (ref Mark VII, 6-8). You follow the letter but the spirit is gone.

There is another word in Sanskrit which is also used as a synonym for religion and that is dharma. It means almost what religion or yoga means but it is a bit more elastic, so you can stretch it to include not only the spirit of religion but tradition and superstition. What does the word dharma mean? Dharma is something which brings us together, which enables us to hold on to each other, to embrace each other. "To hold on" being the root meaning of the word dharma, to hold, uphold. There is also the suggestion in the word dharma of a costume. Why is it a costume? You are holding the costume - we are all walking coat hangers! Do we not treat religion in the sense of an overcoat or uniform that is worn and which naturally wears out? A lovely English word-"to wear" is both to put on and also to wear out. As you can see, that which you wear wears out in course of time and if religion is used in that sense, as something that you put on, that you wear, it must wear out -it doesn't matter what that religion is called. (Thus, we seem to swing like a pendulum-once this shawl is worn out you take another shawl and when that is worn out you wear a third shawl.) That factor is indicated by Jesus when he says: "The Sabbath was made for man,

not man for the Sabbath" (Mark II, 27). That which you wear is made for you and not you for it. You make the dress to suit you but you don't undergo plastic surgery in order that you might fit into a dress. Sabbath was made for man and not man for Sabbath. And this is as true today as it was 2,000 years ago.

Shall we then discard all these traditions and superstitions? Not unless you have discovered the spirit, and if you have discovered the spirit you may feel that you still need some kind of a covering for it. I hope this is very clear. In a nudist colony they insisted upon walking about naked and no objection could make them put on their clothes, till suddenly there was a shower of rain and it was cold. They covered themselves. That is what dress was originally intended for. Dress was intended, not to promote the business trade of fashion designers, but to cover our nakedness and help us endure inclemencies in weather. So, it is not possible to discard all tradition and all superstition altogether, even if you are able to rediscover the spirit of religion, and live it. There are moments of challenge when the human mind longs to hold on to some form. You will still need something or you will still do something, even as the nudists covered themselves.

Whereas the letter may kill the spirit (and one has to beware of that) it is not possible for the spirit to exist and to function independent of a container, the "letter." It is not possible for one to even think except in terms of an image, words, expressions. Thoughts are words. So whereas traditions and traditional practices, which may even border on superstition, might not be necessary when the spirit is discovered, you might discover at the same time that they have a role to play and there is no need to rebel against them. At the same time it is possible that the traditions might enable you to understand one another better. As long as there is hair on the head there is a hairstyle, even if it is a style that is what one might call natural - which means let the hair grow as it wants to grow and let it be as it wants to be which is another hairstyle. Even so you may create another thing called a

universal religion (the very word "Catholicism" means "universal") but please remember that that will become another religion as much contentious as the other religions in the world.

Right from infancy of humanity and the very beginnings of what we have called religion, we have struggled and struggled to understand the teachings of these great ones who proclaimed their vision of a certain unity called God, a certain something in which we are all linked together. That something has been sought to be understood in our own little ways and that is all we could do. It is not our fault; it is not their fault. But unfortunately instead of recognizing the limitations of our own understanding and pursuing from there, from a belief system onward to a discovery of the truth, we elevated tradition, or if you like superstition, to the status of truth. We regarded the images as God, which is absurd and a "sin," if you want to use that word. If you use the image as God, if you use a concept as truth, then the letter has completely and totally destroyed the spirit and that spirit needs to be resurrected - they give you "three days" to do that!

In the same context in which Jesus said, "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," it is said that he also performed a healing and asked the professors of religion (I use the word "professor" in a very different sense - professor is one who professes but does not practice): "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" (Mark III, 4) They were stumped. (Father Terence comments: "If the professors had known their scriptures well enough, they would have understood what Jesus was saying."1) It is a serious question. There is some sort of a tradition which lays down "thou shalt," "thou shalt not;" and this gives rise to a situation in which there is a dilemma.

There is a lovely verse which occurs towards the end of the Mahabharata. (The Mahabharata is an enormous epic that lays down dharma in all its aspects, just as the Bible does: the truth and the ways in which the spirit of truth is clothed -tradition, superstition,

aberration, and all.) Towards the end the compiler or the chronicler says "I will declare to you the essence of all scriptures put together":

paropakarah punyaya papaya parapidanam

"To do good to others; to help others is right, good, meritorious, righteous. To harm, to cause unhappiness to others, to have ill-will towards others is sin."

So here we are given exactly the same teaching which Jesus implies when he asks "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?"

Is it possible then to understand religion as a force, a power that unites us, upholds us, brings us closer together, one to the other and eventually closer together to that truth we all adore and worship in various forms as God? Can the forms all be abolished? It is an unnecessary and wasteful effort, because having abolished all the forms you will create your own form. And then we gloss over the whole thing saying, "Yes we also have an image or a statue, but we don't regard that as God." It is only a clever argument. Take the case of the followers of Buddha. Buddha warned against rites and rituals. Now, we worship the Buddha himself - why not?

There is another example. A holy man has often said publicly: "Yoga will not bring you clarity of mind." Quite right, perfectly right. If standing upside down and doing headstand is going to promote salvation or liberation, or enlightenment, or cosmic consciousness or total awareness, then these bats must be enlightened - they hang upside down all the time! I happened to meet a few of this holy man's disciples (he doesn't have disciples but they consider themselves his disciples!) One of them had a nervous problem. She would not practice pranayama, because her teacher was not in favor of Yoga. Later I happened to meet this teacher; when he heard all this he was shocked. During his talk the next day he declared: "I practice yoga for two hours every morning!"

Jesus might not have asked you to practice yoga but that might be because it was taken for granted. The Essenes practiced breathing and physical exercises every day as part of the routine (ref. The Essene Gospel of Peace, E.B. Szekely). They took a bath every day before they engaged themselves in spiritual practices.

In order to discover the spirit of religion we may need a framework, any framework, but sleeping on the framework will not enable you to discover that spirit. It is hard work that is needed. Not struggle in the sense that you are fighting against yourself, but a relaxed, alert investigation into the nature of truth which alone will bring an internal union, harmony, and internal integration.

This integration was pointed out by a very good friend, Rabbi Gelberman, as threefold. In Hebrew there is an expression "El Shaddai." "Shaddai" is, according to him, not exactly the name of God but something like that. (Incidentally when he mentioned "Shaddai" I thought: "That is what we call satwa or sat as in satchidananda.") And the letter "sha" in Hebrew is precisely like a trishula, trident, and he explained that that itself represented a threefold integration.

The first integration is the union of "I" and "me." This is perhaps the most intriguing, enigmatic and paradoxical situation. You may study all the text books that you can lay your hands on in psychology but you will still not understand clearly whether "I" is "me" or "me" is "I," and why this split takes place. How has it come to be accepted as true? "I pity myself," "I hate myself," "I love myself"- what do these mean? "I hate myself." How can you do that? "I kill myself." "I pity myself." Are you the pitied or the pitier who is on a high pedestal? Is it anything more than sheer hypocrisy? That is one of the three prongs of the trident: the "I" and "me" integration. The second integra- tion is between "I" and "you" - "you being every being that one encounters in daily life. And the third integration is the integration, harmonizing or uniting of "I" and "he." "He" is whatever it is that is not in front of your or in you. What is he? "He" does not only mean some kind of a

god (though it includes it). Maybe it is "she." (I suppose you realize that he is always part of SHE, so don't get offended if I use the word "he" - it is more economical than using "she"!)

The following is one of the most beautiful and potent meditations suggested by the Buddha: the meditation on loving kindness or compassion. The teaching is, first contemplate they who are good to you and whom you love, and radiate compassion towards them - that comes more or less naturally. Then he says extend the same compassion to those whom you neither love nor hate. There are an enormous number of people of that type. Then extend the same compassion to those whom you don't like or who don't like you. And finally, abolish this distinction between you and them. Be compassionate towards yourself also or let this artificial boundary disappear. Realize that the boundary is just artificial: "you" and "I" are not absolutely independent of each other, totally isolated from each other. The very fact that you are able to hear and see me, shows that we are linked at some point or the other. Similarly, if you put a radio receiver here you cannot pick up sounds to which the receiver is not tuned. It is when that link is established that there is hearing, seeing and thinking about.

So there is this unity which is not perceived by us merely because we are not paying attention to it and merely because we have substituted something else in its place. There is an idea that "I am I" and "you are you" and forever unmeetable. The abolition of this idea (and it is only an idea and does not exist as truth) is religion, dharma, Yoga or whatever you wish to call it.

Further references suggested by Father Terence:

1. Hosea VI, 6; Amos V, 21-27; Isaiah I, 11-17.

2. John XVII, 20-26; Ephesians IV, 1-6; Galatians III, 28;

Colossians III, 11.

Tradition and Spirit

Recognize that tradition is a benign danger, an unavoidable evil. And what is even worse, there is a danger in it of a strange type of fragmentation. You think of a certain outmoded fashion, or culture, which according to you is not relevant to present day conditions, and you create a new culture, call it counter-culture. Very soon that culture becomes the establishment. For some unknown or known (obvious) reason, we refuse to recognize this. We refuse to recognize that everything that goes up must come down. (There is no straight line in this universe.) And if you are not prepared for the change, you are too rigid, fit to be discarded.

When the spirit goes it creates a vacuum this is the next and perhaps the more serious difficulty encountered by truly religious people all over the world. The spirit is gone and nature abhors a vacuum, therefore that vacuum is instantly filled with what you might call tradition and what might well be called superstition. This tradition or superstition may be necessary.

The actual words found in the Bible are much stronger than any I could command. This is from Mark (VII, 6-8): "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. Those words are as true today as they were two thousand years ago. Does that happen to us or not?

To make this a little clearer I might tell you about the Indian railways. There is an extraordinary form of behavior which you notice particularly amongst the third class passengers on Indian railways. Unless you have been there you can't imagine what stampede goes on in order to get into these third class compartments, which are not just overcrowded - that is a very tame word - this is incomparable!

Visualize this scene. The train is about to start and people are spilling over the doors and the windows. Then a young man arrives on the platform and says, "Can I get in?" And they say, "No, no!" And he begs and pleads and pushes and elbows and does all sorts of things. Somehow he is able to get a little more than half his foot inside. Three minutes later another man turns up. The previous one is the first one to say, "No room for you." Why not? If there was room for him, why not push a little bit and make room for the newcomer too? We have this vicious habit of closing the door behind us. 3 As soon as our teacher, our prophet, our guru or whatever, has appeared on the scene, the door is closed: "There can be no more revelation, this is the last word."

If you are able to look round, you see that neither God nor His nature (nature is His nature) ever becomes barren. He goes on producing. If such is the nature of creation, that all living things reproduce themselves, why do we stupidly imagine that there are going to be no more God-men, no more revelations? "The tradition to which we belong holds the truth and it cannot be given to anybody else, and God himself has not given it to anybody else." Why is this stupid idea? When this idea is dumped, the next important truth that is revealed to our own hearts is that which is so beautifully expressed in the Bhagavad Gita by Krishna:

sa kalene ha mahata yogo nastah paramtapa (IV,2)

"This Yoga by long lapse of time, has been lost here, o Parantapa (burner of foes)." Time has a beautifully unfortunate knack of wiping everything out. Beautiful when it comes to our sorrows and sufferings because time heals. But at the same time, time has this quality of perverting, twisting, turning, masking and wearing out. In course of time everything must wear out. If not, it is less living than that which wears out. Another peculiar aspect of this time and truth: that which is alive wears out more quickly than that which is not alive. Again a

terribly unpleasant truth, but I hope that you will sweeten it with your own heart before accepting it. Let it be in someone else's words:

"When the spirit goes, the shell remains, and the shell is very hard to break." This was what the first Indian Governor General, Rajagopalachari, said to me when he heard that Swami Sivananda had passed away. That is enough for two thousand years of meditation.

So if a religious tradition, any religion or revelation, has to be traditionalized (has to be, otherwise it cannot be communicated), if the truth that is revealed to you is not clothed in language, decked nicely in metaphors, and pumped with a lot of formalin (formalin - you make into a form), it cannot be preserved. It cannot be communicated. So in order to communicate, you have to do all these. You have to put the truth into words, clothe it in nice metaphors, allegories and parables and what have you. That's what Jesus says: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables..." (Mark IV, 11). Then they go on repeating the story and forgetting the truth. Already. And then when it has to be handed down from generation to generation, you have to write it and print it in a book. The form - formalin - has become more important than the living truth.

So, it is inevitable that every revelation must be converted into a religion, full of these rituals and forms. There is nothing wrong with that. There is something inspiring in a well conducted ritual, and we are all fond of rituals. Don't let us bluff ourselves that we are so highly evolved that we don't need rituals. We all love rituals. Even dressing is a ritual: you stand in front of the mirror, you do this, you do that - all that is ritual. Eating is a ritual: in this hand you hold a fork and in that hand you hold a knife. Is it possible to avoid rituals? No. But do we convert all these into truths? If we do, we are trapped in a cyclical process of tradition chasing religion. This cyclical process becomes fruitful only if religion chases tradition too. Otherwise there is one way traffic, imbalance. That is the danger.

Only a close study and contemplation of the saying of Jesus in Mark (II, 17)4 enables you to understand the Bhagavad Gita better.

yada-yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata

abhyuttanam adharmasya tada 'tmanam srjamy aham

(IV.7)

"Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and the rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself." "Whenever dharma feels threatened" you wonder how can dharma be threatened at all. Can anything happen here which is not willed by God or which is not ordained, preordained? I'm taking it simplistically. Since God's nature cannot be violated, how is it possible for dharma to be threatened? The meaning is quite simple. That is, when dharma is threatened by too rigid a traditionalization, then the spirit of dharma is gone. And what is extremely interesting here is that you are religious, absolutely religious, yet totally irreligious: you have all the trappings of religion but none of the spirit. I have seen this - I grew up with such "pious" people in South India. You dare not call them hypocrites, they will "kill" you as they killed Jesus. And if you are inwardly aware of this whole problem, you are scared to even call them hypocrites, because you realize, "It is alright, I can destroy this structure, but can I establish the spirit in the hearts of people without creating another structure? Can I preserve this body of truth without using formalin?" No. So leave it alone. If possible infuse a little bit of spirit into it. And that force, that power that infuses spirit into these existing structures is called avatara, incarnation or, more aptly "descent."

In a way we are all incarnations. Anything that enters into a living body and lives in that body is an incarnation. But what is so special about what is known as divine incarnation, is the fact that it is a descent. And therefore the word "avatara" is really not incarnation. There is no word in Sanskrit in this context which could be translated "incarnation." Embodied beings are called dehi - deha is body, dehi is

embodied. Avatara is really not incarnation as such, but a descent. That conveys a completely different connotation. It might even be a descent within yourself.

Before we go on to the traditional view of incarnation, let us look at one feature. That is, when this God descends we somehow feel that He must descend in an extraordinary, supernatural manner. You all know that the birth of Jesus is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Genesis defines spirit as the breath of life. God breathed the breath of life and man became a living spirit. So the breath of life is the spirit. There is a character of immense strength called Hanuman in the Ramayana. It is said that he was also born of a mother and had no embodied father. Who was the father? Wind. What is wind? Life breath. Then there is a sort of expansion of the birth story which says that the mother was lying asleep on a hillside and wind entered into her and she bore Hanuman. Lovely. You can interpret it in any way you like: genetically, biologically, logically, illogically, psychologically! The birth of the Buddha is similarly described. We always look for some sort of extraordinary phenomenon, descending - it has to be a descent. So we think of the Holy Spirit descending into the mother.

What are we trying to imply by all this? That this person was chosen to be a superior man. Why do we do that? Why do we look upon Buddha, Jesus Christ, Krishna or "x y z" as some kind of a superior person-born superior? For a very clever reason that thereby we escape the necessity to follow his teaching. That is a very dangerous tradition. Whereas Jesus himself says several times, "Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt VII, 21)." And "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John XIV, 15) Who says it is not possible? When you affirm to yourselves that it is not possible to adhere to the teachings of this man because he was created perfect and we are all imperfect creatures, it is then that you invent a short cut, and tell yourself: "I'll worship him or I will

wear a symbol that represents his presence with me by which I'll be saved." Well, if you have such faith, it is very nice. But faith is not that easy as we shall discover.

Avatara is a descent in order to restore the proper balance between tradition and the spirit of religion. If this has not happened, then even the descent is questionable. Or, since this is the purpose of the descent, it is better for us to bestir ourselves and study the teachings very carefully. It must be possible for us to adhere to those teachings or the teachings would not be there, and the descent was wasteful. If there have been even a few - and there have always been a few who have risen to those heights indicated by the teachings, who have lived as the embodiment of those teachings - it is those few that bear witness to the fact that this was a descent. Therefore it is in their teachings that their mission lies.

Krishna mentions something very beautiful and that is given to us in the story of the vine (John XV, 1-11). What is the purpose of the descent apart from reviving the spirit of religion? It is:

paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrtam (IV.8)

"For the protection of the good; for the destruction of the wicked." "In order to protect the good and to destroy evil." If you go to India and listen to some of the pundits, they will go into ecstasy conveying to you what a tremendously uplifting message this is, that God will come again and again and again to protect the good and "We are all good aren't we?" Whenever I contemplate this, I feel a shiver along my spine. What if God suddenly manifests in front of you now and says, "You first. Are you good? If you are not, you deserve to be dispatched." So, this is not as much a guarantee of protection as a responsibility imposed upon us (if you like that expression) to be good. Otherwise you are not going to be saved.

On the other hand, we have this illustration of the vine and the good horticulturist who clips off the dead branches and prunes the vine so

that it might yield abundant fruits, the fruits of the spirit of religion. These two might refer to what happens to those who are not living a righteous life, the evil, and to those who are living a righteous life, the good. The Taoist symbol enables us to realize that none of us is completely good and, thank God, none of us is totally evil. The purpose of the descent is to chop off those dead branches and to prune the rest and you find these two things happening in our lives. In some of the legends connected for instance with Krishna or Rama, the avataras that are most popular, they are supposed to have destroyed, physically destroyed the evil-doers, the raksasa, the demons.

That is no problem, that is like cutting off those dead branches. Are they destroyed? What do you mean "destroyed"? God is omnipotent but there is one privilege He does not have which we all enjoy: He cannot throw us out of his house. God being omnipresent, it is not possible for Him to throw us out of His presence. But He can do something: instead of putting you on His shoulders as a beloved son, as a chosen devotee, He can throw you down and stand on you. But we cannot be banished for ever and ever.

Now, come back to this vine and pay a little attention as you clip those dead branches. Life was flowing from the root through the stem into all these branches, some alive, some bearing fruits, and some dry. "Dry" means traditionalist - there is no spirit in it. That is clipped off. Why, what for, and what happens then? The energy that was flowing towards it is contained, conserved, liberated, freed from being wasted away. A reason why, particularly in the epic know as the Mahabharata, it is said that all the wicked people who fought against Krishna and his friends attained salvation first. Why so? Because they were looking at his divine face and died. You can't stand in front of the Lord and drop dead and then go to hell. That's an insult to God.

Now, we are not so bad and perhaps the world does not have such totally bad people as are described in some of these epics and legends. What happens to us? What happens to us is thus beautifully described

by Lord Jesus: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." (Matt. V, 29) If you don't do it, God does it. That's all. The offending organ is paralyzed. That's just exactly as good as chopping off the dead branches. That is God's grace. That is the purpose of descent. God descends into our lives as this pruning. On the one hand it is cutting away, on the other it is pruning.

When we are deprived of some faculties, it is not as if we are punished. For me this doctrine of "punishment" from God is very difficult to accept. It seems to be too arrogant a statement. We are like nothing, not even mosquitoes, and in order to confront us and to teach us does this Great God who is omnipotent come with a big rifle and say, "I'll shoot you!"? My God, you don't have to do all that. And as a matter of fact I might even tell Him, "It is difficult to shoot a mosquito with a rifle!" If there is loss of a limb or a faculty, or of something which we think we possess, of someone whom we regard as "mine" and in that relationship something happens which is against the divine will, then that is chopped off, pruned, so that the energy that was flowing in that direction can be effectively prevented from being wasted and used in the right direction, so becoming fruitful.

paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrtam (IV.8)

"For the protection of the good; for the destruction of the wicked." Here (in the word "sadhunam") there is no suggestion at all that what is implied is good people. Sadhunam means anything that is good. Your good thoughts, good emotions and good feelings are preserved, protected by the divine. And where there is an aberration, it is nicely trimmed, pruned, destroyed. Why not use a simple word sometimes when it can do duty for a whole paragraph. Sin - we don't know what sin means, but that is what is implied. Please listen to this, it may be unpleasant again even if it is in strict accordance with tradition, but if it is against the spirit of religion, that will be chopped off, or pruned. If you don't like the violent word "destroyed," use the word "pruned"

- it means the same thing in effect, but we like euphemism a lot more than truth.

sambhavami yuge-yuge (IV.8)

"I am born in every age." This is another enigmatic statement: yuge-yuge has been interpreted to mean "in every age or epoch called yuga," which according to some is 4,320,200 years and according to others much less - you can take your pick. Yuga literally means "two factors coming together." When two things come together, there is a yuga. That word can mean that also. Sanskrit words have got many meanings. What am I trying to suggest? If you suffer at any time from a genuine, serious, soul-consuming, soul-quaking confusion, there is the descent of light, the descent of God.

We are all brought up in a tradition and suddenly there is an encroachment. I don't want to say a new truth, but an encroachment, and you are sincerely and seriously baffled. "What must I do?" It is not a superficial inquiry, but a deep soul-full inquiry. It is not an academic investigation, but one that is more important than life and death struggle, and at that point you have nowhere to turn to. Why nowhere to turn to? Because the two directions from which the truths are coming are the problem. Who will you turn to? Here is the truth given to you by your tradition and there is the truth revealed to you by someone else who says, "This is the truth." So you can't possibly turn to something else, somewhere else in order to escape this dilemma. And yet you feel that it is extremely important. That is confusion, a junction where these two things collide with soul-quaking velocity. If this happens then there is a descent, from within you. You may call it awakening of the kundalini (primordial energy), you may call it shaktipat (transmission of spiritual power), you may call it what you like. And out of these two confusing, conflicting and apparently contradictory points of view arises a new revelation, a new truth. This can also be the descent of God. (Father Terence refers to this as the

"Ah ha!' experience. A new meaning comes from this tension metanoia.")

What is important, especially in connection with an embodied incarnation, an embodied descent like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus or your own Guru, is also emphasized by Jesus in that parable of the vine. That is, if you are the branch, you must be linked to the stem and the root. He says very explicitly and very plainly: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John XV, 5) Meaning: "If you are connected to me as I am connected to God then you will be fruitful, and you will be full of the spirit of religion."

There is a lovely verse isvaro gurur atmeti "God, Guru and Self are one." When the pruning has been accomplished and the energy flows smoothly, without being wasted, without interference, then the integrity of the whole is re-established. That is called dharma: when Isvara, Guru and Self become of one substance. That is what communion means. You partake of the bread and the wine and by doing so you transform your body into the body of Christ, then it is no longer "your" body. Christ has already said, "I and the Father are one." (John X, 30) So at that moment you become one not only with Christ but with God. Or to put it more painfully, but blissfully, you cease to exist. The interfering "you" ceases to exist, and that is when the totality is restored. That is when the integrity of the vine is restored. It is no longer a branch: a branch cannot be a branch as long as it is part of the vine, but when it is cut out and thrown away, it becomes a branch - dead. Why do you call it a branch? It is vine, it is the vine, the totality, from the root to the tip, it is all one single vine. To be truly a branch means abandonment of the idea that "I am a branch and this is the vine." You cannot have that. The branch that says, "I am a branch and this is the tree," as if they were separate, is dead. It is outside of that totality.

So when is the purpose of the descent fulfilled? When they who are able, partake of the essence of the truth that thus descends and restore in themselves the consciousness of the integrity of the whole.

Notes

1. Incidentally, "tradition" in Sanskrit is sampradaya. I'm not exalting one above the other, but just for your entertainment: What does tradition sound like? Trad- ing. And sampradaya - daya is "to give," "donate." Sampradaya is "giving correctly and very well." So the Oriental always gave knowledge, knowledge of scriptures. The Occidental however, seems to be very keen on trading in these.

Further comments by Father Terence:

2. This was not a response to a particular abuse, but indicative of a more profound struggle of Jesus, viz: against a legalistic understanding of the chief commandment. Jesus seems to have been opposed in general to this legalistic attitude which seeks honor in the sight of God. Ref. Mark II, 23ff; Mark III, 1ff; Matt. V, 21ff; Mark VII, 9-13.

3. Ref. Jesus' attack on the Pharisees - Matt. XXIII.

4. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I come not to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus calls the outcasts not only to repentance, but to God to the God who confronts them in Jesus. Temptation of the righteous is to think they do not need God day by day and as a result they may not recognize him when he comes.

5. We are reminded here of dangers of discipleship. Also picks up the theme of the "narrow gate" (Matt. VII, 13). Necessity to do the will of the Father (as Jesus did) - ref. Luke VIII, 21.

Discipleship

What is said about the distinction between the spirit of religion and the inevitable tradition is equally and simultaneously true of the word of God and the word of man. It is very well to say that the scripture is the word of God; if you believe in it you can go along with it for some distance. Suddenly you discover that there are other versions, other editions, of this word of God. Then you begin to wonder, did God actually say these words or some other words, and in what language did he speak? Then it occurs to you that maybe it is the word of God but it has come through the lips of man. A powerful doubt has arisen: the "maybe."

A very great contemporary saint in India who lived early this century, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, once remarked that all scriptures, irrespective of their origin or the tradition to which they relate, are polluted. (In India anything that has touched your lips is considered polluted and cannot be offered to anyone else.) So, even the word of God, when it passes through human lips, is polluted. The purpose of this incarnation is to revive the word of God, in distinction to the word of man. That's why you find Jesus saying again and again: "The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works." (John XIV, 10). Even in this tiny text of a few pages (in comparison with the Oriental scriptures that we study as Yoga) you have this statement repeated again and again: "I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me command- ment what to say and what to speak." (John XII, 49)

Then there is the other statement, "...the Father who dwells in me does his works." (John XIV, 10) These are statements which are very inconvenient and which need to be contemplated with all our heart and soul. And if we don't do that there is a problem. It is on this basis that perhaps one has to accept or regard one's own immediate guru (teacher, priest or rabbi) as the incarnation of God.

You have been brought up in a tradition and now there is a challenge from elsewhere, and there is a fusion, confusion. Confusion, not in the sense of bewilderment based on doubt, but in the sense of the fusion of these two forces. When there is bewilderment on the basis of doubt, you tend to drop the whole thing, walk away, and "let's eat, drink and be merry." But then you realize that "eat, drink and be merry" also leads you nowhere. So when neither this nor that satisfies you, neither this teaching nor that teaching seems to be totally valid, and when there is this soul-quaking collision between your tradition and someth- ing new, it is possible that this collision might set off a spontaneous intuitive understanding. That is your guru. One single experience makes the revelation true, a reality. And when that revelation occurs, when that understanding arises, you also understand the purpose of tradition.

The experience is the guru- the teacher; not merely the word, because the word of however great a person, is still the word of man. When does it become the word of God? When you realize without a shadow of doubt, that this is true. Then it becomes the word of God: and the incarnation, the descent has fulfilled its purpose.

If Jesus himself thought that his teaching was effective, he would have been the most disappointed person on earth. Why? Why is it that even he was abandoned? Abandoned by his own disciples, betrayed by one and disowned by the foremost. Because they had been brought up in the highly intellectualized, Jewish tradition, and here was someone, apparently a man, who referred to himself as the Son of man, which meant, "I am no better than you are," or "What I do, you can also do." And these words were said by Jesus, "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do..." (John XIV, 12)2

Here was someone who appeared in our midst, who lived like us - ate, drank, slept, taught and even suffered; and he also worked some miracles and wonders. Concerning those miracles, there is a hint in the

Gospels that the Jewish elders of those days declared that he was able to work these wonders with the help of the devil (ref. Matt. IX, 34) — an unfortunate statement which the later church leaders used in relation to yet other people. Even those miracles did not impress everyone. Why? It is possible that, as in the story of Moses (Exodus VII and VIII), others were also able to perform those miracles. When someone performs a miracle, some people are impressed, the others sneer at him and go away. Jesus himself warns against placing too much value on the working of miracles when he says to his disciples: "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke X, 19-20). Maharshi Patanjali in his famous text on Yoga also strongly discourages the seeker from placing any value on psychic powers etc. as these can lead to arrogance and thus prove a great distraction from the quest for God-realization (see the Yoga Sutras III.37).

So, these disciples of Jesus were looking at him, they heard him and thought, "This seems to be something new." In spite of the fact that he said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matt. V, 27) Another very important statement: "Not to abolish them but to fulfill them." He said something which looked new. Why so? Because they had forgotten the word of God. They had buried it and on top of it grown their own "plants" of tradition. So you can see that right through there was this inner conflict. Instead of regarding it as a confusion (when confusion arises you look within), the disciples probably felt it as a conflict and therefore they were coming into conflict with the society.

The disciples had to wait until they experienced the truth within themselves. Their confusion was probably set in motion by the resurrection phenomenon (ref. Luke XXIV). They went to the tomb and

found that he was not there. He died and walked about later - that resolved a certain conflict but also brought about a certain confusion. They were prepared to see it in a different light, because now it is no longer a man but something else. What is this? And what is the resurrection in relation to the descent or avatara that we are discussing?

It can best be understood when you take the point of view of Yoga. When does someone become a guru? When there is the descent of light into him. When does the light of God descend into him? When what was considered as the "me" is totally consumed by the fire of knowledge, or in the Christian terminology, has been crucified and killed, laid into the tomb. If the "me" can be destroyed totally and buried, into that personality descends the light of God. Can you and I while still breathing and appearing to live, die so totally that the divine might descend into us? That is the condition for the descent of God.

You have a beautiful saying by Jesus, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt XVI, 25) While yet appearing to live, is it possible to so completely abandon one's life? Then the divine descends into it." When the divine descends into that soul, into that personality, which has been completely emptied of the "me," it is no longer that old personality.

Therefore the yogi worships, adores his Guru as God. What we looked at was of course the physical frame of Swami Sivananda, but we realized that it was not the Swami Sivananda that was a medicant and so on, it was not the appearance of a human personality that we regarded as Swami Sivananda. But when that whole being had been totally emptied of the "me," the divine descended into that personality and spoke to us. Even this is not an entirely exotic doctrine. It seems to have been prevalent in the Hassidic tradition among the Jews: they regarded their Rabbi as the mouthpiece of God. That is, here is a man so totally pure, so free of the "me" that he

becomes the channel for the flow of the light of God, the wisdom of God.

There is a beautiful text called the Philokalia which is the story of the early Christian monks, known as the desert fathers. Their teaching asks the Christian disciple to regard this person, (the Starets, the spiritual teacher, the guru, the priest, the father confessor) as Christ himself, and get close to him, follow him implicitly. And of course, there is the obvious parallel in the Christian tradition of the priest's role: not only is he regarded as the representative of the Christ, but he is also known as the "alter Christus" (the other Christ). So, the guru-disciple relationship is there. But there is a problem again: is it possible or is it even wise to assume that every priest, monk and swami has reached that point where he has completely emptied himself and therefore become the most perfect channel for the flow of divine wisdom? What is the criterion? The criterion is entirely yours, the disciple's.

There is this distinction between the word of God and the word of man. In the word of God there is no doubt; in the word of man there is always doubt. When the word of God is transmitted by or through a true Guru or Master, it has that ring of certainty. Hence you find, "When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." (Matt. VII, 28)

I believe that there are quite a number of root meanings for the word "authority" but merely look at that word there is "author" in it. The AUTHORity is one who is the author of what he is talking about, and the non-authority is one who is merely quoting someone else. If you are fortunate enough to meet one who speaks with authority, not because he shouts, not because he is assertive, but because he is the author of what he is saying, in his presence all your doubts vanish. Can one find such a situation in which you are with a Master and he

teaches you? In his words you sense the truth, and you know that "This is it" - there is no doubt.

Nobody can be an authority on the word of God except God himself. This person could not be an author of the word of God if "he" himself was still there. It is when he has completely emptied himself that the light of God descends into him, and it is the Author himself who is speaking to you. But when you do not have the good fortune of meeting such an authority, it doesn't have any effect upon you.

Every word that you hear has a counter-word in you own mind - there is no authority there, it is all coming from the library. We are not talking about these people, though they are fulfilling their roles.

Now, it is not as if it is all on the side of the Master, though the Master's share is quite large in this communication of truth. It is also the disciple's eligibility, receptivity, that is important. That is beautifully illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the sower and the seed (Luke VIII, 5-15).6 The seed of truth is potent. But if the sower drops the seed on the wayside, birds come and pick them up and eat them. If the seeds are dropped on rocks, they are fried, they become ineffectual. If the seeds are dropped on uncultivated soil, they seem to grow but they are soon overpowered by the weeds, and if the seeds fall on fertile soil, they grow and yield abundant fruits. It is a beautiful illustration.

If all of us happen to meet someone who is enlightened, through whom the wisdom of God flows without distortion, is that sufficient guarantee that we would all be instantly enlightened? Sorry, no. That is the tragedy here: even that word of God uttered by the incarnation, the avatara, might fall on infertile soil. Here is something which is unfortunately but unquestionably true. It militates against what we fondly love to believe: that this omniscient God would know what to do. But look round your own garden, you find that even there there are no absolutes. You look at a tree which bears a million seeds, not

all of them destined to grow into trees. Does God (nature) not know which is destined to germinate and endow that with the potentiality and leave the rest of the fruits seedless? No. That is the law of nature. It may be that you and I do not understand.

Maybe again, what Swami Sivananda said is true. He used to say, "I have planted the seed. It will grow in its own , time. Can we perhaps understand even the parable of the sower in this manner? The seeds are dropped alongside the road, the birds pick them us, and the Lord says, "Don't worry, the birds will drop them somewhere else and they will grow." Possible. Is it possible to see that even the seeds that fall into the bush grow into small plants; they are choked by the weeds, but then they fertilize the soil for a seed coming down on the same place much later. Nothing is wasted in nature. So that even when the teaching of a Christ, a Buddha, or a Krishna, falls on infertile soil, it is possible that the seed acts as the fertilizer. Though it does not grow into a plant instantly, as we would love it to, even that seed is probably not wasted, ultimately.

But we are talking about the soil - ourselves - we are the ones who are concerned. Except the ones who are really "fertile" and therefore able to receive the seed and immediately respond to it, we are not really disciples, though Yoga also recognizes three or four types of disciples. In Sanskrit the gradation of discipleship is known as adhikari-bheda; and that is precisely the same principle as in the parable of the sower and the seed. Uttama adhikari, madhyama adhikari, adhyama adhikari: one who is highly qualified, one who is middling and the lowest type of disciple.

There is another little illustration used to describe the other categories of discipleship which may be easier to understand: If you have a whole bundle of cotton soaked in petrol, you dare not even light a match in the vicinity, that thing will burst into flames. That is the disciple of the highest order, an excellent type. The most fertile type of disciple is one who by a mere look from the Master is able to realize the truth. He is

full of the spirit already, though he doesn't know it himself and all he needs is one spark, one word of instruction, and that gets him. The second one is like charcoal - you add some fire to it and you keep on fanning and eventually it will catch fire. The third one is like banana stem- a spark is no good, even some coals of fire are no good, you have to very carefully assemble the fire and set it alight, even then it won't catch for a long, long time. That is like the seed thrown on the rocks, it doesn't germinate for a long time. However, you can see that even this can be interpreted in another way. If there is a banana stem, leave it there; in another two thousand years it will become fossil fuel, capable of being ignited very easily and quickly!

So we have the Guru and we have the discipleship and it is not a sequential relationship. One interacts with the other all the time. When you are immature, even the perfect Guru is inadequate. When you are highly mature, even an imperfect Guru is sufficient. It is not a cut and dried system. It is something which is totally interrelated. A highly disciplined disciple is able to transcend the "me" within himself and at that moment commune with the truth that dwells within the Guru, but behind the Guru's own "me." So it is not entirely the Guru's responsibility, it is not entirely the disciple's responsibility, it is the interaction between these two that contributes to the awakening of the divine in one's heart.

Thus, if you are burning with eagerness to discover the word of God within yourself, it is possible for a parish priest to be the medium for you to get there. Why? Because the word of God is there, within everybody, everything. On the other hand, if he is a highly enlightened person, it is possible that even if you are "a banana stem" he might invent some way of "drying you out and setting you alight." Also possible. It is the sincerity and true aspiration that is of vital concern.

Further comments and references by Father Terence:

1. 1 Thess. II, 13. The life of a man risen "in Christ" consists of his living in his own way the mystery of Christ.

2. Faith in Jesus will bring to the Christian power from God to perform the same works that Jesus performs, because by uniting a man with Jesus and the Father, faith gives him a share in the power they possess. Ref. Matt. XXI, 21 and Mark XVI, 17.

3. Romans XII, 3-8 and I Cor. XIV, 19. "Gifts" in relation to Christ are services; in relation to the Father, they are workings of the divine power.

4. More than a new teaching a new Law of Love to be written on men's hearts. Romans XII, 10.

5. Like the grain going into the ground: John XII, 24. Emptying of self is the heart of discipleship: Romans VIII, 12-14; Galations II, 20.

6. Importance of being receptive and remaining receptive, like the child: Mark IX, 36-37.

7. In this context, ref. the Parable of the Patient Husbandmen: Mark IV, 26-29.

Like a Little Child

Teaching and learning are not always what we take them to be; there are levels of communication distinct and completely different from verbal communication. This the yogi accepts: that one has to learn Yoga from a teacher, but that that learning is not what we commonly consider learning to be. It is communication, and that communication can take place on unknown levels, on unknown planes.

This is not meant as an Oriental mystery. A story is told of St. Francis: he was a simple, loving, humble saint, teaching people how to be loving, kind, gentle and particularly how to lead a life of poverty - not this business of ugly poverty, but to be poor in spirit. One day he was walking through a small town; there were some people around him, curious about him. And they walked with him, "A great teacher has come, a Christ-like teacher has come to our town!" Even then he was quite simple and humble; probably he was looking down at the earth and treading very carefully, very gently. He entered this town by one end and left it by the other. Someone stopped him and said, "Sir, are you the teacher we have been waiting for?" "You have been waiting for me?" he asked. "Yes, someone has been saying that a great teacher is coming to enlighten us and we have been following you - just for that. Aren't you going to teach us, or tell us something?" St. Francis looked at this man and said, "If you have not learned so far, I am sorry - I cannot teach you any more. If you have not been able to observe the way I have been walking, the way I have been talking, the way I have been behaving - if you have not had the power of observation, then no teaching is possible. Saying a few words is not going to be of any use to you."

So two things are necessary. First, a teacher is necessary, no doubt; but a teacher may speak to you through "different tongues." Speaking through tongues in Christianity is the pentecostal experience. To me, even this pentecostal experience implies speaking through tongues other than the physical tongue: there is a tongue in the heart, a tongue

in the head, a tongue in the eyes. So we need the teacher, but the teacher may speak to us in a million ways.

Secondly, therefore, how do you learn? You learn by being observant. With what do you observe? With what do you learn? Can you learn through your mind? That is what we are trying to do all the time, we try to use our brain, and that is why we fail. And if the lens of your spectacles is dirty, you will find that everything round you is dirty. On the same principle, if the mind is dirty, filthy, then all that is registered by that mind must be dirty.

So you must approach the teacher; and when you approach the teacher you must ensure that your mind is clean, that your heart is clean. A mind that is absolutely clean, is no mind at all; a mind that is not conditioned by thinking, not polluted by past impressions, is no mind. Such a mind was possibly referred to by Jesus when he said, "Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (ref. Matt. XVIII, 3).2 Often this is misinterpreted to suggest that we must be childish in our behavior, not child-like. My own feeling is that Jesus referred to babies, little ones, to minds that have not been polluted by wrong learning.

The difference between you and that little baby is this: whereas the baby sees only light and shadow, truth and appearance, substance and appearance, you have an enormous variety of labels. Stand in front of a little baby not more than six weeks old, and watch how it looks straight at you with wide-open eyes, as if inquiring, "What is this?" When you move, the baby's eyes move too. It is certain that such a baby does not see a swami. It sees neither a swami, nor a Hindu, nor a Brahmin, nor even a brown face. If you wish to learn to meditate, the only person to teach you is a baby less than six weeks old. When you look into its eyes, you will know what meditation means. There it is in all its absolute purity, gazing at you without projecting a single thought of what you are.

So that is possibly what Jesus meant: that you should learn to see as you were born to see - not taught to see. That's beautiful - that is the essence of Yoga. Learn to see as you were born to see, then you begin to discover what the Truth is.

So, in order to learn Yoga, you need the help of a teacher, and the teacher may act best by directing your vision to this inner light within yourself. The teacher may also, by the grace of God, create such confusion in you, that you lose all confidence in what you thought was pure, strong ground before - for the simple reason that unless all that is thrown overboard, you cannot be like that little child. This may be considered shocking. People use all sorts of epithets when it comes to this: terrible... heretical... blasphemous... and so on. But if you go back to the time of Jesus, isn't that exactly what he did? If you can go back to the time of Buddha, it is exactly what he did. If you go back to the time of Socrates, that is exactly what he did. The reason he was poisoned was for corrupting the morals of the younger generation!

The one who directs your attention to this presence of inner light is the Guru. The inner light is that in which you are able to see the whole structure: the presence of the ego and the shadow cast on your life by the ego. Once he has drawn your attention to this, his job is over, he can do nothing more. Our problem is that even when the Guru draws our attention to this inner set-up- the ego, the light, and the darkness cast by this ego - we still like this darkness. It seems to be so nice that it is a pity to drop this thing.

So long as the curtain of ego is still here, you will find your life is a mess. That is the test; not what you say, not the testimony you give or do not give - the test is to look at your own life and see if it is still in a mess.

The last hurdle is not for the human personality to cross, it is for the Divine to descend and redeem the seeker. The veil cannot be lifted by man. All aspirations, even for liberations cease, and the seeker says in

the words of Jesus: "Not my I will but Thy will be done." It is idle to repeat the formula, for the Divine will only descend into a pure heart, and remember that crucifixion must precede resurrection. Resurrection is a divine act, not a human achievement.

Further refs. and comments by Father Terrence:

1. "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false (Psalm XXIV, 3-4)

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. V,8)

2. Child-like receptivity is a condition for discipleship - ref. 1 Peter II, 2, and Mark IX, 36-37.

3. Confusion and rejection on the path: John VI, 60 and 66.

The Chosen

When a disciple who is qualified, eager, receptive and mature, meets a Master who has had the enlightenment experience plus the ability to communicate (which means scriptural or theoretical knowledge), what happens is called Yoga. The rest is exercise, training, some kind of psycho-physical or spiritual practice. There is nothing wrong with that- but that is not Yoga. Yoga is two things coming together - this is the criterion. In this context it is the qualified student coming into contact with the enlightened Master. Till this contact takes place they are near each other, not only in the physical sense but in the psychological and spiritual sense too.

Multitudes heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount - they were all equidistant from him, if we can assume it that way. But how many were really touched psychologically, spiritually, morally, emotionally or totally? Very, very few. There is a beautiful expression in the Bible: "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. XXII, 14)1 Chosen, not because of the whims and fancies of the chooser or the capricious nature of the Master, but chosen because. There is no "because." As my Guru, Swami Sivananda used to say, "If the needle is clean it is instantly attracted by the magnet, not because the magnet loves this particular needle and not the other one; the magnet has no such distinction. It so happened that this was a clean needle, that's all. The other one might become clean two thousand years later." This inner psychological, or spiritual contact takes place when the right student or right disciple meets the right master -that is Yoga.

What happens at that moment is illustrated by the beautiful Easter ceremony: one candle being kindled with another. The celebrant of the mass walks in with a big candle and everybody lights his own small or big candle from that candle. Never mind whether your candle is small or big, when the wick touches the flame, it is lighted. Is this flame different from the other flame? No, the flame is exactly the same: quantitatively different, but the quality is exactly the same. Hence,

Jesus tells us, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher." (Luke VI, 40)2 Why is it so? Because this candle was kindled from the enlightened one, and there is no distinction in enlightenment. This is called shaktipata in yoga terminology: when the Master transmits the spark of enlightenment to the student and that spark instantly burns away all that was there as the personality of the student and transmutes him into the likeness of the teacher.

What if this does not take place? Maybe some more rubbing is needed, maybe even the anxiety to be enlightened has to be dropped and one should busy oneself with the preparation. There is a block within. The rust on the needle is a block. Maybe it is a psychological or emotional block, or maybe it is something else. Is it possible then, without getting anxious, to become enlightened? That anxiety is entertained by the ego, which has to get out of the way.

There is a beautiful saying in one of the Tamil scriptural texts by one of the enlightened Masters:

asai arumin asai arumin isanodayinum asai arumin

"Cut down attachment, craving, desire even if that desire superficially seems to be desire for God." The word "even" there is most important, otherwise you may take it to mean: "Cut down the desire for God, the rest of it is alright." The orthodox teaching was that in order to destroy all other forms of worldly attachment you must desire God and this desire for God gets rid of worldly desires - quite right. On top of this, the holy man says, "Even that is a desire. See that and drop it." When that is also gone you will be chosen. There is no doubt.

The difficulty is indicated by Jesus' saying, "Many are called but few are chosen" as also by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita:

manusyanam sahasresu kascid yatati siddhaye yatatam

api siddhanam kascin mam vetti tattvatah (VII.3)

"Among thousands of men, one perchance strives for perfection: even among those successful strivers, only one perchance knows Me in essence." Why is it so? Because even this eagerness to attain Self-realization may be the movement of the ego, in which case there is no God-realization- it is not possible. The ego itself will block it by what superficially appears to be a holy desire. Only the egoless man reaches Self-realization, but does the egoless man know that "I am egoless?" What does it mean?

Therefore it is said in the Bible, in the Bhagavad Gita, as also in several of the Upanishads:

yamaivesa vrnute tena labhyah

"He whom God, the Self, the Infinite chooses, he alone is enlightened." (Katha Upanishad). This is an almost exact translation of Jesus' saying in the Bible: "You did not choose me, but I chose you." (John XV, 16)3 Obviously, "If you chose me it was because you had some motivation: then you are not chosen by me."

Does God or the Self (the atman) also have its own likes and dislikes, favorite sons and disciples? No. When man chooses God there is usually a wrong motivation, however altruistic this motivation may be. If you observe the movements of your own mind you will see this. Whenever you make a choice, at the same time look within - there is a horrible craving. Except your parents, you choose every- thing else in life. You choose your teacher, your Guru, your religion, the way you worship God - everything is the ego's own choice. Is there one little action of the ego which is aimed at its own destruction? In other words - please excuse the gruesome metaphor - do you as fondly embrace a wild tiger as you embrace your boyfriend or girlfriend? You know that you will be swallowed, eaten up. Embracing God is like embracing an unknown wild tiger! God really loves you then, you become one with God.

So, here is a path that is not difficult in the sense of the difficulties that we experience climbing a mountain or swimming across the ocean, but this is an intensely inward, psychological difficulty, to overcome which the ego has no means at its disposal. This is the spiritual problem and therefore we all shy away from it and engage ourselves in various religious activities and console ourselves that God will somehow be pleased. We reduce God to a human level. An anthropomorphic concept of God is only a concept but we have a funny way of treating God in that way. We superimpose on God all the human qualities, instead of the other way around. We are asked by scripture to see God in all, which means to superimpose divine qualities on the human personalities that you see around you. But you think that God behaves in exactly the same way as a human friend behaves. However, a human friend may not be able to see your inner motives, but God dwelling inside sees them. A system of ritualistic worship is for most of us very beneficial. But if this system of worship is indulged in as a substitute for this spiritual communion with God, it is a nuisanace, a block.

Here is a doctrine of "neither-nor:" neither the ritual nor its abandonment is the road to salvation. The ritual is necessary, but only as the path to God-realization with all that it implies. The candle that you are holding, kindled from the other one, behaves in exactly the same way as the first one: it has light, heat and a little smoke. Qualitatively there is no difference; quantitatively there may be. Meaning: your life resembles the Master's. So Jesus asks: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke VI, 46). What a strange phenomenon! And another quotation: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. VII, 21)

What does the true devotee do? How does he behave? What is his nature? There is a lovely teaching in .the Bhagavad Gita:

madbhakta etad vijnaya madbhavayo papadyate (XIII.18)

"My devotee, knowing this, enters into My Being." Bhakti is exactly the same as Yoga: union. When there is bhakti or love between God and his devotee, between the disciple and the Guru, in that communion the disciple inherits, as it were, the very nature of the Master. The devotee inherits the very nature of God. To the questions: "Have I reached that state of Yoga or not? Have I really received communion or not?" the answer is found here:

"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. V, 48) If that is not there, it is not there. Let us not compromise the teaching by saying, "Well only God is perfect. We are all weak and we can never become perfect." We are blaspheming against the teaching. You are suggesting that Jesus did not even know what we are capable of doing.

Two vital statements become relevant here: (1) "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do." (John XIV, 12) and (2) "You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."4 These two indicate the possibility. If you and I are not "there," you and I are not "there;" the teaching is not wrong. If it was not possible, he would never have commanded us to be perfect.

Thus, one who is truly devoted to the Master, to God, inevitably inherits the very nature of the object of worship. What that nature is and what form this spiritual transmis- sion takes, is symbolized in the Holy Cross and the verbal teachings of Jesus.

The Cross has been variously described and interpreted. There is even one Christian sect that claims that the cross was really not a cross. According to them Jesus was hung up on a pole - a monolithic tree and the concept of the cross arose later. They have their own arguments, their own scientific and historical discoveries. One interpretation need not exclude the other. So it is possible that there was a cross and it is possible that that was also symbolic. Perhaps it symbolizes the earlier

commandments that Jesus had reiterated: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. XXII, 37 and 38) These two are also recorded in the Bhagavad Gita: tam eva saranam gaccha sarvabhavena bharata (XVIII.62) "Adore your God in all manner possible" and:

atmaupamyena sarvatra samam pasyati (VI.32)

"Look upon all, treat all as your own self." Exactly the same teaching.

The way in which pious Christians cross themselves has often suggested to me precisely what the commandment says: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark XII, 30) Therefore, during prayers, they touch the head, the heart and the shoulders. This suggestion seems to be nice. Where is that God? The Cross reveals where. The vertical beam implies: above and below. Above in the sense that God is beyond reach of the intellect.

yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasa saha

(Taittirya Upanishad)

"Beyond the reach of the intellect." Your intellect cannot reach the supreme truth. And that God is not merely beyond your intellect but deep within your own heart.

isvarah sarvabhutanam hrddese 'rjuna tisthati (XVIII.61)

"God dwells in the hearts of all beings." Is it a sort of selfish game that you look for God in your heart or in a transcendental state of meditation? No. The next commandment says: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The horizontal beam of the cross points out: to your right and to your left. "To your left" already suggests that you love your enemies or people whom you don't like or who don't like you. It is natural to love those whom you consider good - the "right" - but some people you have "left" behind, calling them evil - love them also. So

the arm stretches out in both directions. That is the teaching that is given to us.

If you visualize the crucifix with a figure of Jesus on top of it, you see that the two beams -the vertical and the horizontal meet exactly at the heart. That is where God dwells. Heart is both physiological and spiritual. Spiritually the heart is the very heart of your entire being - physical, mental, moral, the whole lot. That center is not located anywhere, but is everywhere with its circumference nowhere. If there is love at that center, naturally, the circumference being nowhere, it becomes limitless, or in the words of the Buddha, "Unbounded love which knows no distinction.

There is an absurdity here again, to say that "I love God and therefore I hate Satan." If you love God, if you love (leave alone God) at all, it is incongrous that you should have any hate or any form of hate like ill-will, fear or jealousy in relation to anyone on earth. If these two emotions can co-exist in the same heart, how can you say that "I love" even one person? That is not love. That is something else. Maybe that is an unnecessary compensation for the fear or hate that you entertain. If there is love in the heart it will not entertain any other form of emotion: it is not possible for light and darkness to exist together. That is ridiculous.

There is a beautifully pertinent story about a Muslim girl saint. A Muslim priest gave her a copy of the scripture and told her to read it. She went on reading it: "Love God, love God" - it was fantastic! Then came a portion where it said: "Hate the devil" and she quietly scratched it out. The priest returned, picked up the book and said, "You have scratched out the scripture. Blasphemy!" She said, "No, I could accept the statement 'Love God,' that is natural to me, but then I thought that this should not be part of the scripture. It's probably a printing error. Because if I love God with all my heart, how can hate, even for the devil, arise in it?" What does it mean? If you allow that hate to arise in relation to what you call the devil, then please

remember that every time the mind wants to hate someone it will first call him a devil -you give the dog a bad name before hanging it- obvious. So, loving God naturally means that the heart is incapable of hate and all its retinue. That is the teaching that is given by all enlightened beings and rightly comprehended by true disciples or devotees. If this has not taken place, Yoga has not taken place.

In the cross is symbolized both what we call karma yoga and bhakti yoga. (Bhakti yoga is an unnecessary repetition. Bhakti means yoga, yoga means bhakti.) Bhakti yoga and karma yoga must be practiced together, in as much as you cannot love someone without dedicating yourself totally, with all your strength, with all your heart, so that all your energies are directed towards the service of that person. This is possible only if you love God in all.

The yogi or the devotee of God is intensely interested in the welfare of all beings. If you are in love with the entire universe, naturally your whole life is dedicated to the service of the entire universe, all beings in the universe. That ideal is suggested in the Gita by the words: sarvabhutahite ratah (XII.4). "Intent on the welfare of all beings." But to the impure mind, the mind not purified by the touch of this true spiritual aspiration, even that expression is totally incomprehensible. How is it possible for one to be deeply interested in the welfare of all beings? Immediately your mind translates this teaching into some sort of a practicality: "If I have only one piece of bread and there are six people hungry, how can I satisfy all these unless I am a Jesus Christ and can multiply this?" So must you give this piece of bread to one or two hungry people or not do it at all for fear of discriminating between some and some others? This is one of the questions that immediately arises when the heart is impure. What it is to love all and therefore be totally devoted to the service of all beings is impossible for the impure and immature human intellect to grasp. Is it possible at all? If it is not possible the scripture would not say it. We try to put the cart before the horse. We would very much like to know the result before we

undertake the action and that is not allowed in the practice of Yoga, in the practice of religion or the spiritual life.

What has been said must be within the realms of possibility. This is the teaching given by Jesus Christ in the Bible and by the masters of Yoga in the texts that one studies as a student of Yoga.

Further comments and references by Father Terence:

1. Caution against the false security which thinks that God's salvation is "in the bag." "Called" and "chosen" are sometimes synonymous. Called taking up the initial invitation. Chosen persevering to the end. This call is not anyone's "by right" but must be lived anew each day.

2. Ref. John XIII, 16 and XV, 20.

3. Ref. John VI, 70.

4. Paul is aware of the possibilities of perfection - thus the need to struggle: Phillipians III, 12-16.

5. Ref. The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures by Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society of Pennsylvania. 1969.

6. Love of the "ungodly" - ref. Romans V, 7-8.

Tearing the Veil-Evil

That which veils the reality apparently creates a split in it. The first split is the idea that something is real and something is not real. We can't even bother to look at the expression on the semantic level. "Unreal" is not - that is the definition of "unreal." To say that something is "unreal" is a contradiction in terms. That is where the whole mischief starts.

First, there is this division: "This is real, this is unreal" and therefore the next division arises: "I- you" or "I-he." The reality/unreality split pollutes everything: "I am real, you are unreal. My pain is real, your pain is not so real.' Others' sufferings and sorrows seem to be trivial and ours enormous. "I am OK. You are almost OK." Thereby arises this division into good and evil etc. and so it goes on endlessly multiplying itself.

It is evil that creates pain, suffering, sorrow; whether it is a sense of evil within oneself (which is very difficult to perceive) or evil seen in a certain relationship. This whole equation can be turned upside down. Whatever causes this psychological distress is evil. In truth, in what exists, in what is God's creation, there is absolutely no sorrow, no suffering. And if there is an experienced pain, like in childbirth, that is simultaneously compensated for by a delight. It is an extraordinarily beautiful fact which one has to appreciate without any prejudice whatsoever. Even in what is called "mortal agony" there is an undercurrent of supreme joy: "I am soon going to be released, freed from this." But cultural conditioning might mask one or the other, exaggerate one or the other. That is not the fault of reality, but your attitude to it.

So, what is called "evil" arises from this division, the split that one imagines as a fact between the real and the unreal. It is of that split that all the evils that plague our lives are born - desire, craving, hate, greed. These are all born of that evil (which is "veil" misspelt), the

veiling of reality which creates the division between the real and the unreal (as if an "unreal" thing can exist).

The other definition of spiritual life is based upon the description of God as spirit - "God is spirit" (John IV, 24) - anything that is related to God as spirit is called the spiritual life. Anything that draws you closer to God or spirit is also called "spiritual life." In yogic terminology it is satwa-sat being the same as God, the pure existence. That which exists, which does not cease to exist, which does not di-minish, which is infinite, is God. That quality, which is almost indistinguishable from sat, is satwa. Satwa is then vaguely translated into goodness, righteousness.

A split arises there and that split creates a certain unclarity of perception which is called rajas in yogic terminology. Rajas has every conceivable type of meaning that you can give it - dust, dirt, filth, dynamism, activity, veil - everything. When activity is motivated by a "dirty" intention it becomes rajas, otherwise it is divine activity - activity in strict accordance with God and His will. This truth is veiled in the ignorant. If you say it is veiled forever, that is the end of it there is no sense in pursuing this inquiry.

This truth is effectively veiled in the ignorant by a thing called tamas-the doubting Thomas! How tamas arises is impossible for the tamasic or veiled mind to understand. This tamas is somehow able to veil the whole picture so effectively that the knowledge which is God (not knowledge of God) is somehow veiled from itself and there is an imagination, an imaginary unreality, an imaginary evil. But as long as this is experienced, it is real and what is thus experienced as a dream or hallucination can have experiencable results. The great mystic philosopher, Shankar- acharya, gives an every-day example: You dream of somebody strangling you and you scream and wake Up. You smile - it was only a dream, it wasn't real. But put your hand on your chest, it is thumping-that is real! How could an unreal dream assailant produce a real palpitation of your heart? If the dream world was

totally unconnected with your physical being then that unreal experience could not produce a real experience in another state, but so it is.

Now the confusion is complete or the unclarity is complete, and evil is born. How could there be a veil in that which is supreme light? When one is unable to find an answer to this question, suddenly evil becomes a reality. When God created the world and saw it was good (Genesis I, $1) how does evil arise and does evil arise in God too? This question cannot be answered by anything that is within the purview of the evil itself - the unclarity, the veil itself. The mind, intellect and reason are subject to this veil and therefore these things cannot possibly unravel this mystery and bring about clarity.

So, paradoxically again, the problem of evil can only be resolved when God is seen and God cannot be seen unless the veil is torn. So where are we? We're trapped, completely trapped. Therefore these great ones - the Guru, the Incarnation or the Avatara - emphasize the need to cultivate the spirit of renunciation, to turn away from darkness and move towards light. Vasistha puts it very beautifully, unambigously: "Do not investigate the unreal, because such an investigation gives it the stature of reality." Investigate what is real and you will find that these unrealities disappear without a whimper: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." (Matt. VI, 33) For without a clear understanding of God it is not possible to know what righteousness or goodness means.

Goodness is not a mental concept but something which is God, which is of God. Jesus very beautifully declares: "No-one is good but God alone." (Mark X, 18) It is good to remind ourselves that all equations are true both ways. God is good or good is God. So if you keep digging within yourself into what is good, you must find God. And when you draw close to this divine presence, goodness arises automatically. You don't have to put forth the least effort. To be good is not difficult at all and it does not involve effort. If there is effort there is something

wrong: that is, you are trying to be good, which is good! But you are only trying to be good. When does one try to be good? When one is not good! Is it possible for the human being, with a loaded, polluted mind to be good? No. Krishna rescues us from this dilemma in the Bhagavad Gita:

sarvadharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja (XVIII, 66)

"Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone."

Precisely the same thing in the Bible: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," "Come to me." Turn towards the light, towards God within and everything else will be taken care of. So all these things are bound up very closely together.

The abandonment of what is evil, the spirit of renunciation, the cultivation of goodness and righteousness and faith in the existence of something that is perfectly good (not to be confused with any human personality, however great and glorious that personality might appear to be), are all synonyms. The mind tries to translate all these words into its own image and the Holy Bible says, smash all those images that your mind makes. (Exodus XX, 4) On the one hand you have the teaching that the Son of man, Jesus Christ, is our Lord and the Lord is perfect; and in the yogic way of life you are asked to regard your Guru as God. On the other hand, Jesus himself said, "Why do you call me good? No-one is good but God alone." (Luke XVIII, 19) And Swami Sivananda says, "Don't be deluded, choose your Guru carefully." And to those who wish to be gurus he says, "It is a deadly sin - don't get into that trap." So, where are we? Square one? Thank God, at least that is there!

We are habituated to living and thinking on the basis of either/or; the truth may be neither/nor. It is neither that you should look for perfection in a human form nor turn away from all human form God is hidden in all these beings. So this needs a lot of understanding - not so much work as hard inward investigation to raise this understand-

ing. It may be Jesus Christ, your parish priest, your Guru, a great yogi - he is not perfect and yet there is perfection in him. It is a bit of an inconvenient truth for us because if we are told that "This is God," we can fall at God's feet and say, "God, look after me will you?" It is over. If we are told that "This is evil," we can turn away from it! Finished. But if we are told that what appears to be appears only to you to be so- "Oh my God! Again you are harassing me with all these teachings. Why don't you give me the truth? Why don't you give me God?" Sorry, it's not a pudding to be handed to you by someone! That which appears to be God to you is a false god. But does God exist? Sure. What exists is God. There is perfection in you. But not in the sense that "I" (the observer) see perfection in you.

When you look within to see what it is that wants to see perfection in another person and so be devoted to him, you might discover, to your horror, that that is imperfection. Why are you looking for security in money and human relationship? When you look within, you realize that it is a terrible sense of insecurity that thinks there is security there. If there is insecurity within, why will you seek that security in someone else's company? When the burden is thus transferred from the shoulders of the other person to your own understanding, you reach just the same spot where perfection lies in him. That which is in him is in you. That which is in the Guru is in you; that which is in the Christ is in you. Jesus himself says: "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (John XIV, 20) We are all occupying a certain space, in a manner of speaking, and this space occupied by me is in no way different from the space in which you are sitting. The physical occupant of that space is different from the physical occupant of the space here. But the space does not undergo any change whatsoever. That is so in regard to God. So instead of investigating the external appearance (that is, chasing the unreal), investigate in whom this appearance arises. There is someone in whom the experience of appearance arises. There is the kingdom of God - within - and in that

kingdom we are all citizens. When this is understood, "That" is instantaneously understood.

Faith arises then, not before. Before, it is merely a belief system- it may be necessary as a springboard - but faith arises when there is a glimpse, an inkling of this reality. It is when faith arises really that we are able to turn away completely from all evil. That is, when the veil is gone you will see, and when you see the veil is gone. That is unfortunately the truth: unless you have some direct experience, even if it is a mere glimpse, faith does not arise. It seems to be possible that even after having had a glimpse, this faith is still shaky. For instance, when Jesus walked on water (Matt. XIV, 25-31) and then called to Peter: "Come." Peter started walking there was faith. Then doubt crept in and... splash! I don't know if you appreciate the gravity of the word "faith." If you contemplate this story you might suddenly realize that all the faith that we profess doesn't deserve to be called faith at all except for the word - it's just called faith, it is not faith. Faith is an extremely subtle and difficult thing and it does not arise unless you have had a glimpse of the reality. Till then it is only a belief system.

Is belief so bad? No. Everything starts with a belief system, but do we stay there or do we progress further? Do we investigate the truth and discover it as truth? That requires some amount of sincerity, which we lack.

Once this faith arises then there is progressive tearing of this veil, which is evil. Since we are turning away from the darkness of ignorance and moving towards the light, goodness arises spontaneously, without effort. Darkness is not a reality, it is defined as "absence of light." (Even that I am not quite sure of because in the darkness you can take infra-red photographs, so there must be some light in that darkness. The cat is able to find its way. There is some mythical idea of absolute darkness I have not seen it!) Light is the reality, so instead of saying "turn away from darkness," face the light and go on. This is called renunciation.

The teachings of Jesus are full of this spirit of renunciation. If you read the few places where the spirit of renunciation is emphasized you will readily see that it is not something to be renounced but a certain attitude to life, a notion or misunderstanding that you have, that is to be renounced. Take for instance this dialogue: "A ruler asked him, 'Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him... 'You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.' And he said, 'All of these I have observed from my youth.' And when Jesus heard it he said to him, 'One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me."'" (Luke XVIII, 18-22) That was a bit difficult! Which means, that he was not really keen on entering the kingdom of God.

It is not as if Jesus preached renunciation and renunciation alone to everybody. Renunciation is the abandonment of clinging to a phantom that you have created within yourself. It is that phantom that generates insincerity. So if you face yourself- yourself being the reality - then you will see that your own life is plagued with this insincerity. But if you adore your father and mother as images of God that is perfectly alright. If you lead your life in strict accord with the commandments- the life being what is popularly known as worldly life, family life there is no problem. If you have the feeling that "All that I am doing is for God," there is absolutely no problem because there is the abandonment of the notion of the self as distinct from something else -a self which has its own ideas and ideologies, as distinct from that which is determined by the cosmic being. If you want to enter the kingdom of God, be like little children (ref. Matt. XVIII, 3) and abandon your petty likes and dislikes.

So, what is to be abandoned is not a certain lifestyle, a certain religious affiliation, a certain mode of worship or a certain relationship or a certain possession, but the sense of possession -the sense of the self

as being distinct and different from everything else. To be like a child acting spontaneously. Unlike the theatricals, this spontaneous action is not something which you can generate by training.

Thus, in the teachings of Jesus as in the teachings of Yoga we find both these: a formal renunciation and the spirit of renunciation while yet living a full life. Whether you are going to be a member of a religious order or a householder living a righteous life, is not up to you. But wherever you are it is possible to cultivate and live in the spirit of renunciation. So the teacher who inspires you to cultivate the spirit of renunciation may indicate that this spirit might lead you in one direction or another. As long as you have the light with you, whether you go north or south you still have the light. The whole path is illumined.

It seems to me what Jesus demanded of his disciples was total sincerity. Sincerity is the root of all virtues. The sincere seeking of God and his righteousness - God and his dharma - is spiritual life. Perhaps a few letters from that word "righteousness" can be dropped so the word becomes simply "rightness." What is rightness and what is not rightness? If you contemplate this perhaps you might discover that what is rightness is merely an appropriate response, appropriate action which is again inconvenient to the lazy man. It is not easy for an immature personality of unclear vision to function where there are no do's and don'ts, no dogmas, no injunctions and prohibitions which may easily be observed. When someone says that rightness is appropriate response or appropriate action, that leaves you again dangling with nothing to hold on to. We love to be consistent in order that we might become respectable. But we don't see the absurdity of the whole concept on the very face of it. Such consistency is often a symptom of paralyzed intelligence. A truly awakened intelligence functions very differently-intelligently. For instance, a man may love his wife, his mother, his sister, his friend, but he dare not behave in exactly the same way towards all! The love is there but it flows in an

appropriate manner towards each one. So rightness, righteousness, is an appropriate response, and appropriate action. Thus, if it is your destiny to be a member of a religious order you behave appropriately and if it is your destiny to lead a family life, your behavior is appropriate to that situation. It does not mean that the monk is in any way superior or inferior to you. You are two limbs of the same person, the same person of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus instructs his disciples to go and spread the good news he lays down certain rules: "Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food." (Matt. X, 9-10) The same rules are found among the religious orders of India though I have seen very few who really adhere to these principles. Our minds have a strange way of re-interpreting these rules and regulations and that is where the spirit is lost.

Whether you are a religious person or you lead what is known as a secular life, the spirit is very important and a constant re-examination of that spirit is essential. Is renunciation possible? Yes. But not without faith, and faith is not possible without a glimpse of the reality. A glimpse of the reality is satwa which is close to reality itself, and indicates the existence of the reality beyond all doubt. Though, as the Yoga Sutras (IV.27) caution us: between two experiences or glimpses of this reality the old samskaras or tendencies (habit patterns) may arise again, creating a momentary division or confusion or non-understanding. But if the faith is there, which means the glimpse has been there, that glimpse will provide the incentive to go on in spite of these momentary lapses into misunderstanding.

Referencecs

1. Ref. The Supreme Yoga translation of the Yoga Vasistha by Swami Venkatesananda. (1.3.2)

Further references suggested by Father Terence:

2. Ephesians V, 7-9; 1 John I, 5-7; 1 John II, 8-11. 3. Ref. blindness cures: Mark VIII, 22-26; Mark X, 46-52.

Renounce the Unreal

When the Guru, who is a descent of God - the Avatara - comes into our lives, he has a twofold message. It is thus very beautifully put by my Guru, Swami Sivananda: "Detach the mind from the world, attach it to the Lord" the two being a single movement. It is also stated in the Bhagavad Gita:

sarvadharman parityaya mam ekam saranam vraja (XVIII.66)

"Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone;" and in precisely the same words by Jesus in the Bible: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke IX, 23) In that there are two beautiful statements which seem to indicate the two ways in which this renunciation-cum-yoga could flow. One is: "Abandon everything and follow me; take up your cross and follow me; be prepared even to sacrifice your life in order to follow me. The other is: "Go forth and serve." In both cases one thing is absent and that is self, selfishness.

It is not possible to define selfishness because it is not possible to define unselfishness. Therefore you find in the Bible as well as in the Bhagavad Gita two statements which could appear to be contradictory. In the Bible: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matt. V, 17) The prophets say: "Honor your father and your mother." (Exodus XX, 12) In order to honor your father and mother you have to leave your own self behind and go honor, work, serve. Then comes the other statement: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" (Mark III, 33) There the self is abandoned again but in a different context - a context in which you feel that the entire universe is your mother and father, brother and sister (ref. Mark III, 34-5).

Whereas observance of religious, or in this sense, social obligations may be very important, you will still have to abandon yourself and dedicate yourself to service. But the other aspect is still there: there

may come a time when those things mean nothing; when the Christ, the Lord within you calls, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead." (Matt. VIII, 22) We thought a funeral was so important, especially in respect to those whom we love, cherish, honor and so on! That may be unnecessary at some point.

If you study all these extremely carefully, you will realize what is really meant by abandonment of self. They who abandon their self come to the kingdom of God. They who abandon their lives earn eternal life (ref. Mark VIII, 35). These things have absolutely no meaning unless you truly realize what is meant by life, what is meant by self. Can you abandon life? What do you mean by "abandon life?" "One bullet and you are dead." But that is not abandoning life - life cannot be killed, destroyed. What is meant by "life" in this teaching is something different. What is meant by life is the idea, the false concept that "This is my life." The simple and direct realization that "This is not my life," is the abandonment of life; at that very moment you symbolically lay it down. If you realize that, not in theory or as an idea, but in fact and in truth, then you are prepared to lay down this life for the sake of others. If it is "your" life you will never do that. What is yours you carry on your shoulders but when you realize that "this is not mine" you put it down - offer it to God and let His will be done.

Therefore the teaching concerns doing what has to be done in life - whether you are to be Mary or Martha, cook and serve or sit near the Lord and press his feet (ref. Luke X 38-42). These two paths are there, both of them implying the renunciation of the idea of self and of dedicating oneself totally to God that is Yoga. Taking up the cross and following Him might lead you along this path or that path, but not for the sake of the self. If the self is not there how can anyone do anything for the sake of the self-selfishly?

Until it is realized that the self is not there, there can be a lot of deception. I do not believe the concept of self-deception. It is always deceiving others and that is sheer waste of time. You gain nothing by

deceiving others. To think, "I am selfish" or "I am unselfish" is a mere rationalization till the existence or non-existence of the self is directly perceived and discovered.

When, in the light of this inquiry, it is realized that what was called the self, what was mistaken for self, was nothing but a shadow, then the idea of self ceases to be a reality. Will the idea of self disappear? What for? Why do you want to beat a shadow? Gaudapada says very beautifully in his commentary on the Mandukya Upanishad:

prapanco yadi vidyeta nivarteta na samsayah

"If this creation has come into being it will cease to be. If the self has come into being it will cease to be, but it has never arisen at all and it is an enigma, like a shadow on the wall." You cannot say it is there, nor that it is not there, like the image in the mirror. This is something which your brain cannot possibly understand, so how can the self be abandoned in order that "I" may be selfless? "I want to destroy this selfishness in order that I may become selfless?" The whole thing seems to be a wasteful, meaningless and ridiculous exercise.

This is where the real and serious practice of Yoga in all its aspects becomes very important. You cannot understand unselfishness, nor how to abandon the idea of the self as reality. The idea of the self as idea is quite alright. How to abandon all this, how to abandon life? You cannot understand how unless it is immediately linked with this "Take up thy cross and follow me" (ref. Luke IX, 23). One without the other is impossible. You cannot abandon the world unless you have found something else. Can you examine whatever appears to be yourself? If what appears to be is a body, examine that. If what appears to be is life breath, examine that; a thought, a feeling - look at that. And if what appears to be is a sense of "I am," look at that and when that goes... it neither goes nor remains. It is illumined, it is enlightened and in that very "space" you will see the reality - God.

So these two are simultaneous: abandonment of the self (or the realization of the non-existence of the self) and the realization of what it was that has always been (the reality).

When the self is gone, or when the idea of "the-self-as-the- reality" is gone, then suddenly you realize - "Aha, the world is something else, 'I' is something else too." A new vision arises. Nothing has changed, but everything has been totally and radically altered. That is when you are able to say, "Yes, I recognize her as my mother, I recognize him as my father, but who is my mother, who is my father? The entire universe is my father and my brother." Not because the universe is a real entity, but because the whole thing is pervaded by the one essence - thus described by the great sage Yagnavalkya:

na va are sarvasya kamaya

sarvam priyam bhavati atmanastu

kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati

"All things are dear to you because there is no other." There is none other than the one- - call it God, atma, Self words are unnecessary here, because all of us are unpartably one. In that dimension, because we are indivisibly one like space, we love one another.

On this "stage" of life when we have to play different roles - fathers, mothers, brothers, friends is it possible that this realization can be lost? Quite possible. Even if you are an almost enlightened person, as long as you are caught up in this body-mind complex, it is quite possible. That is what we usually call attachment. How can we overcome this attachment? There is a moving story in the Bible of the last moments of Jesus: "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!" (John XIX, 26-7) You think at least this relationship is inviolable you may marry someone and divorce that person a little while later, but you

cannot possibly divorce your father or your mother - that is an event which took place before you were born. But no, you had a feeling that "This is my mother" and that feeling was centered in the misunderstanding that "I am this body," and therefore the woman who gave birth to this body is "my mother." When this confusion between the body and consciousness which expresses itself as "I am this body" is given up, what are the relations that were associated with this body? They were related to the body no doubt, but "Now that I am discarding this body, who is my father, who is my mother? She whom I thought was my mother might just as soon be somebody else's mother."

There is a lovely story in the Bhagavatam2 where somebody calls up a departed soul and says, "Look, your father and mother are terribly worried. Why don't you come back to this earth?" and that person says: "Father? Mother? Who? I have got thousands of them. I have had tiger fathers and lion fathers, buffalo fathers, deer fathers, which one are you talking about? Why should I come back here, why not there?"

So, what is attachment? Attachment is a dreadful misunderstanding based upon the primary ignorance that somehow links this body with the feeling "I am." God or consciousness, who is limitless and infinite, throws up an awareness "I am" everywhere and that awareness is free, independent. It is demonstrated to us daily by our own sleep experience, but somehow it gets caught up in the feeling that "I am this body." The resolution of this enigma puts an end to that. And when this enigma is resolved, there is a perception of the impossibility of attachment. This is important. You cannot fight attachment, you cannot abandon attachment: you cannot abandon anything that does not exist in fact and in truth. This is axiomatic. In the very act of trying to abandon that, you are creating it. That is the reason for Vasistha's constant and repeated insistence, "Do not investigate what is unreal, investigate what is real. "3 What appears to be real right now-

investigate that and go on. You will eventually arrive at what they call God, Braham, atman, cosmic consciousness, the Father in heaven, the kingdom of God.

The abandonment of what does not exist constitutes renunciation. It's absurd isn't it? And the abandonment of what does not exist is simultaneous with the realization of what exists: God. If there are relationships in the world in which we live, and if they are not brought about by you and by me, why are we so anxious to preserve or terminate them? The sun did not rise because you or I wanted it, and that is precisely true of the events of our own lives. "I did not ask to be born. I may not want to die, but I will." Yet why is it that in this short span, while all these appear to be happening, there is so much inner conflict, confusion, anxiety, worry, fear, hope? The abandonment of this is not abandonment of anything, but it is the relentless pursuit of truth.

"What is real in all this?" When that truth is pursued relentlessly, layer after layer of the veil is lifted. This is where the techniques of Yoga become meaningful. But you don't sit and merely repeat: "I am immortal Self." You are not! There is a body, appreciate it. There is an idea in the mind, become aware of it. There are feelings and emotions, become aware of them. There is a sense of relationship, become aware of that. Stage by stage reach out further and further. You wonder: "What do I do with the sense of relationship that exists now?" Jesus answers: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Mark XII, 17). What was held out was a coin. There is the figure of Caesar on it, so Jesus used that example. Expressed beautifully in the Bhagavad Gita as: mam anusmara yudhya ca (VIII.7) "Remember Me and fight" i.e. do what you have to do without confusion, without division (this is very important). In the same way when you look at yourself, there are all these things: emotions, thoughts, feelings that you are somehow related to others, the feeling that you have some duties and responsibilities in this world

and there is also a sense of God. Do not sacrifice one for the other. Do not promote one at the expense of the other. As long as you have a sense of duty towards society, fulfill it, but don't forget God. When you are devoted to God, it is wonderful, but don't forget your duty as long as that sense of responsibility is there. Let the world enjoy that part of you that feels related to the world. There is another part of you which is related to God or the Divine - let it be devoted to the Divine.

mam anusmara -"Think of me, meditate upon me....

yudhya ca -"fight your battle of life." One does not contradict the other because ultimately the whole thing converges and that is called karma yoga. If you understand that one little phrase in the teachings of Jesus (Mark XII, 17) you have understood the entire message of karma yoga which is further expanded and illustrated by Jesus: "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. (John XIV, 10. Also see John X, 25 and XII, 44-5) This is one of the basic elements of karma yoga; to realize that it is not "I" that does it. "I" am powerless. God can do all things - not man, not "I."5 And if that God chooses you as an instrument for the time being, you can also do wonders, miracles, but only from the human point of view, not from the point of view of God. To underline this tremendous teaching, you find in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus was unable to do all the wonderful things in his own country that he could do elsewhere: "And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.' And he could do no mighty work there.... And he marvelled because of their unbelief." (Mark VI, 4-6) So there is the suggestion that even that might happen if it is His will. His will is not for you or me to determine.

In the Gita, Krishna says to Arjuna: "You are a great warrior, no doubt, but be an instrument in my hands." It is said that when Krishna had left the world, Arjuna suddenly found that he could not even lift the weapons that he was formerly handling with such ease and precision.

He realized that it was Krishna's grace, his power or shakti, that was working through him performing all those fantastic miracles. Without his grace nothing is possible; with it, everything is possible.

nimittamatram bhava savyasacin (XI, 33)

"Be thou a mere instrument." This is fundamental to Yoga, this is karma yoga: that is, while being active in this world your consciousness is linked to God. Karma means action, Yoga means linking one's consciousness with God. Do whatever has to be done, but realize that it is God who is doing everything.

The other attitude that is recommended for a karma yogi is enshrined in a very beautiful and inspiring verse in the Bhagavad Gita:

yatah pravrttir bhutanam yena sarvam idam tatam

svakarmana tam abhyarca siddhim vindati manavah (XVIII, 46)

"He from whom all the beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with his own duty, man attains perfection." This was taught by Jesus in a very simple, direct way: "... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. (Matt. XXV, 35-6 and 40) It is not as though you serve someone and it is translated like foreign exchange transac- tion into the currency in heaven and your account is credited there. Right here is the God who is in heaven. The kingdom of God is within you (ref. Luke XVII, 21). So what you are doing to this person you are doing to God. You regard this person as so-and-so only because you have identified the body with the consciousness that dwells in it and becomes aware of it, and on the basis of that misunderstanding of yourself you have a misunderstanding concerning this person. That creates a lot of inner conflict and

arrogance - a supercilious sense of superiority. If that statement in the Bible is read and constantly meditated upon, you instantly realize what was stated in another language and idiom, in another text called the Bhagavad Gita:

yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pasyati

tasya 'ham na pranasyami sa ca me na pranasyati (VI.30)

"He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him."

God is not some kind of an old man sitting beyond the clouds. That is why they use the expression: "The kingdom of God is within you." It is not as if there is an entity called god sitting in your heart, but it is a kingdom not in the sense of earth, territory with boundaries - but because God reigns in it. That kingdom is your heart. He is within you. Is it possible to live in such a way that every action that proceeds from you in your daily life, glorifies God and bears witness to the fact that you are the kingdom of God and your life is presided over by the divine? That is the question.

Further references suggested by Father Terence:

1. Galatians II, 19-20; Romans VI, 6.

2. The Book of God - translation of the Srimad Bhagavatam by Swami Venkatesananda, reading for May 27.

3. Ref. The Supreme Yoga: translation of the Yoga Vasistha 1.3.2 by Swami Venkatesananda.

4. Ref. Martha and Mary story: Luke X, 38-42. 5. Ref. Mark X, 26-27.

Devotion

Karma yoga is yoga in daily life, yoga in action. Activity being inevitable to life, every living creature is active. A problem confronts us when we inquire into the motivation for that activity. You cannot really do

nothing, but while you are doing what you are doing, why are you doing what you are doing? Are you even aware of that?

There are three fundamental statements in the New Testament: 1. Not even a sparrow falls unless it is the will of God (Matt. X, 29). 2. "I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works." (John XIV, 10) 3. "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." (Luke XXII, 42) One suggests almost total predestination: that is, nothing can happen that God has not willed, even what you are doing is willed by God. You realize that you cannot alter destiny, but you can observe the motivation for this destiny and see if there is any motivation other than the divine will.

In order to bring this about, what the yogis describe as bhakti is necessary. Devotion. And to indicate that this devotion is not emotionalism or sentimentalism, there is a quotation from the great philosopher saint Shankaracharya:

svasvaru panusamdhanam bhaktiritya bhidhiyate

What is bhakti? This great man defines it as "being constantly rooted in the inquiry concerning the self." Love is not merely jumping on each others' necks and strangling one another, but it is constantly being devoted to the object of devotion. There is a continuous stream of something other than emotion, something other than sentiment and other than possessiveness - something mysterious. When this flow is interiorized, that is what Shankaracharya calls bhakti.

You are not constantly trying to figure out what someone else, God or the devil is doing; instead you are constantly paying attention to the source of the flux of your own life, of the actions that flow from this life. You don't assume that all these things come from God - then you are asleep, your awareness is asleep but realize that something is happening. But does this happen or do I wish it should or should not happen? Thereby hangs the tale, which is not very comfortable for the

souls who rather like to let go and rest, hoping that everything will be alright.

In this regard, Jesus almost rebukes his disciples on the night of the Last Supper. Jesus tells some of his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." (Matt. XXVI, 36) When he returns, they are fast asleep. "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. XXVI, 40, 41)2 For people who are fond of this sort of psychological or spiritual sleep, a constant awareness of what goes on within oneself as actions flow in life, is an inconvenient thing. So we tend to use some sort of cliches, like "Oh God's will be done." God's will is done. But are you aware of it or not? If you are not aware, it is not true, it is not realization - it is guesswork. So, all this involves the realization of God.

What is God? In virtually none of these scriptures is God given to us as a ready-made "piece of pottery." Why is it so? They realize that this is counterproductive. Whether it is a graven image or an image put together by thought, by mind, the image is an obstruction to the realization of truth and the image is a limitation of the illimitable. For the same reason Buddha quietly dismissed the whole game by saying, "Do not measure the immeasurable." Measure what is measurable- that is, your own thoughts, feelings, emotions, motivations, desires, hates. Measure them, be- come aware of them, take hold of them. But there is something beyond which one intuitively realizes or understands. That is not measurable - leave it alone. However, the human mind refuses to leave it alone. If you say "the infinite, immortal," the mind still conjures up a thing called "infinite, immortal." The mind does not question how a thing that has come into being, will not cease to be.

The mind doesn't question because we love to fall asleep, and therefore Jesus uses a few paradoxical expressions paradoxical in the sense that they are unteachable, beyond teaching.

Sometimes the "Kingdom of heaven" is used and sometimes the "Kingdom of God," but it is always emphasized that this Kingdom of heaven is within you. "Our father who art in heaven" (Matt. VI, 9) - don't look up, you will see only cobwebs and ceiling! God is in heaven and that heaven is within you. Then there is the expression, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. VI, 21) Do you treasure this God within? In which case your heart will be devoted to that God and you will seek His Kingdom within. But we have neither time nor the inclination. We collect empty shells and throw away the pearl. We do not have the wisdom of the woman who chose the King:

Once a wise king had a bright idea. He wanted to know who among his subjects was truly wise. He had it announced that on a certain day the doors of the palace would be thrown open and that anyone could enter and take any one thing that was in it. People came in their hundreds and took away the valuable jewels, carpets and other articles of worth. One woman walked right through the corridors, without taking a second look at the glittering jewelry there, walked right up to the king and said: "My choice is your Majesty. I want you." With him, she had everything that was in the Kingdom. Therefore, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.

That Kingdom of God is within you. As my Master Swami Sivananda points out again and again, God is nearer to us than the breath that flows in our nostrils. We should learn the art of finding Him within ourselves by prayer and meditation. But we only want the objects of sense-pleasure. Even when we pray we ask only for them. And God who is all-love and supreme compassion, grants our prayers: we get what we ask for, but soon discover that the choice was wrong. The objects only increase our worry and misery. Miseries come to awaken us. A great Indian saint, Kabir, has said: "If only you had the sense to worship God when you were prosperous, you need not have to suffer this adversity." Adversity is a way God calls us to turn to Him. When I

am walking along the road and you are behind me, you call out to me; but if I do not hear and respond, you tap my shoulders with your walking stick or umbrella. God has been calling out to us again and again: "All ye that labor under a heavy burden, come to Me." But we do not listen and therefore, He gently taps on our shoulders with the stick of adversity. We have to turn now.

We turn to prayer. We come to the Holy Church and pray. Is it not significant that we close our eyes when we pray? Does not this act prove that we intuitively know that God is within? Do we not close our eyes when we take a beloved child into our arms and hug him close to ourselves? Does this not prove that the greatest happiness is within - in God? Seek ye first the Kingdom of God! The Kingdom of God is within.

When we pray, we commune with Him who is perfect. When we pray, the sin-hardened heart melts. We feel the Presence of God within. Our pride and prejudices evaporate. The ego is shaken. We are in the Presence of God. We open our eyes. The Presence persists. We begin to see that the Kingdom of God is not only within us, but within all - in every atom of existence. It is when our awareness or consciousness flows in a constant stream towards this God "within" that there is right action, right living or, in the words of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, "appropriate action."

There is a lovely expression in the Bhagavad Gita which can be paralleled with a beautiful illustration in the Bible. The expression is manmana or maccittah. One is the conscious mind; the other is the subconscious mind. Maccittah cannot be grammatically translated into English. Citta is "mind," and mac means "me." (It is God who is speaking.) How does one make the mind God, God- minded? What can the Kingdom of God be likened to? Jesus expresses it beautifully: "The Kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." (Matt. XIII, 33) That is maccittah. You generate one little spark within and by constantly

dwelling upon this in meditation, in prayer, the entire mind becomes "saturated," "filled" (none of these words is really adequate). What happens to the yeast? Does it grow? It seems to permeate every grain of the dough. You cannot possibly make that happen; it happens.

So, devotion or love of God is not a thing, a part of your consciousness, or mind, for when it is dropped into this mind, this citta, it (love) takes over. It doesn't dominate just as the yeast does not dominate the dough and therefore Jesus used that illustration to point this out. That is bhakti. It is at the end of this process of "saturation" that you realize that the entire life is devoted to and is lived in total accord with the divine will. Which only means that you have no personal will or desire of your own.

It is then that one really understands what is meant by the other sayings of Jesus. "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you should put on... Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap... and yet God feeds them... Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Luke XII, 22, 24 and 27) Is this the gospel of the dropout? "I don't have to do anything. God will do everything." God does not do anything except through you. (Father Terence aptly comments: "Believe as though it all depended upon God, but act as though it all depended upon you.") It is one form of ego that says "I will do this" and another form of ego that says, "I will not do this." Similarly: "I hope to gain this and therefore I will do this" and "I am afraid of the consequences and therefore I will not do this." "Will" and "will not" on the one hand; hope and fear on the other. Whether or not they are accepted as things which can be classified as good and evil, they are all based on the ego. The action is interfered with by the ego. It is not as though if you willed it would happen. It is not as though if you hoped that the sun would shine forever it would not set. None of these things has any regard for your private motivations. But the ego creeps in and usurps

the role that rightly belongs to the Divine. This truth is realized only when the mind becomes completely saturated by God-consciousness.

One of the most important methods by which this God-consciousness can be inculcated in us is known as meditation or prayer. You can use whatever word you like, as long as the principle is understood. Jesus himself pointed out that prayer or meditation is not intended as more fuel for the ego to burn more furiously (ref. Matt. VI, 5-6). That is when you demonstrate. Demonstration is something that is usually resorted to by one who answers the description of the first five letters of the word! One who is genuinely interested in the truth doesn't have either the inclination or the time to go about demonstrating.

There is the suggestion not to use vain repetitions: "In praying do not heap up empty phrases." (Matt. VI, 7) Repetitions are not cancelled, but vain repetitions of empty phrases. This is the method of japa. The Christians, the Hindus and the Muslims all use a rosary sometimes, but such prayer becomes vain repetition when (and only when) the spirit is lost. So, we are confronted with the same thing all over again: it is the spirit that is important. However, to philosophize that: "It is the spirit that is important. I can do what I like," is a negation of the spirit, blasphemy against the spirit. Repetitions (japa) are important, but they must be filled with spirit.

If you are able to engage yourself in the repetition of the name of God or in prayer, fully conscious of either the meaning of the prayer or the contemplation of the mystery of the inner sound itself, then that is no longer vain (empty) repetition. You may need to repeat a prayer a few times, but that does not make it vain repetition if either the spirit is entered into (spirit in the sense of "What's happening? Who is praying to whom?") or you thoroughly understand the meaning and you let it work as the yeast in the citta, the mind. You repeat "Thy will be done" a thousand and eight times. The mind does not easily accept, "Thy will be done," so you keep repeating it. The one thousand and seven times

were fruitless, but maybe the one thousand and eighth time will get you there.

This focussing all one's attention upon oneself is bhakti.

If there is a God, He is there, just beyond the "me," just beyond the ego. Beyond, not in a spatial sense, but in the sense of a screen with the pictures projected on it: the pictures being the ego and the screen being the Divine. You cannot say they are on it-nothing can be said. This prayer constantly clarifies (realizes) the "screen," as it were, so that even while the pictures are on you are able to see that it is the screen. But for the screen there would be no picture there, but the screen itself is not the figure. How are the figures formed there? No-one knows. This constant investigation of the truth concerning oneself, which is God, is called bhakti.

There is a very beautiful and inspiring dialogue between Jesus and some of his disciples. They begin to vie for positions in his kingdom (as if that were possible): "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' And they said to him, 'We are able.' And Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."" (Mark X, 37-40) In other words, God-realization is not for you to demand, not for someone to hand over to you. God-realization, by its very definition, means God is real. It is not that you can make God real, the God that you "make real" is something else, an image. That God who is real is known only to God, not to you; that is what it means bluntly.

You can travel up to a certain point, you can go right up to the door and knock - it shall be opened (ref. Matt. VII, 7). That it shall be opened is a guarantee, but it is not up to you or someone else to open it. And

when it is opened, it is possible that you might disappear. Swami Sivananda composed a very beautiful poem: "The darkness of ignorance knocked, the light opened the door, and lo, the darkness vanished." So the poor thing never got to see the light! That is the cup. Are you prepared for this? Or are you still clinging to some sort of individuality or personality that you want to perpetuate? And if you are prepared to totally crucify your personality, then who is it that is hoping to survive? Are you still worried about "my wife and children," "my property," "my this and that?" Greater immaturity no man has seen. All this shows that there is no surrender, no crucifixion and obviously no resurrection or ascension. If you contemplate this, then you understand also what is meant by "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no-one comes to the Father but by me." (John XIV, 6)

In the New Testament you have the same enigma or paradox that you find in yoga teachings. The Guru is at once regarded as manifest God, incarnate divinity, someone who shows the path, someone who is the path, the truth. It (the Guru) is both human and divine, and something that links the consciousness with the Holy Spirit. That consciousness-ness the divine plus the personality then becomes individuality. It is the Holy Spirit that links these two. The Guru or the Christ-consciousness is that which is the very basis of the "me," the screen upon which the "me" appears, which is God, the connecting awareness. All this is represented by the guru. The Guru is God, the Guru is human, the Guru is something outside of these, the Guru is the linking force and the Guru is the path through which we reach the divine." Ultimately, it is when the seeker's consciousness is totally absorbed in the Guru's conscious- ness, that he finds that he is one with God, which Jesus indicates very often: "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (John XIV, 20)

Does it mean that we should accept Jesus and Jesus alone? Possibly yes, why not? If that is what you want, that is what you will do. There is absolutely no objection to that. But do it meaningfully, not just

blindly. It is then that you may suddenly understand the supreme mystery that just as you are one with Christ and therefore God, everyone in the universe who treads this path is also one with Christ whatever language he uses, whatever name he uses one with God. There is absolutely no difficulty. Everyone has to use some sort of approach, some sort of psychological door, spiritual door, through which to enter into this other dimension called the Divine. It is not a spatial thing but it is a dimension of consciousness. Whether you call it psychological or spiritual or whatever, there is a door through which you get out of this state of ignorance in which you find yourself and enter into this dimension which is divine. It is a door comparable to the door through which we pass in and out every day while falling asleep and waking up, but we are not aware of it; that is unfortunate.

"No one comes to the Father but by me" suggests a parallel to a statement found in the Bhagavad Gita:

yad-yad vibhutimat sattvam srimad urjitam eva va

tad-tad eva vagaccha tvam mama tejomsasambhavam (X.41)

"Whatever being that is glorious, prosperous or powerful, that know thou to be a manifestation of a part of My splendor." "Look around and see what is most glorious, most beautiful, what inspires you. See that as a manifestation of God; for no-one has been able to reach the unmanifest except through something that is manifest." It is the unmanifest that manifests itself in infinite ways. The infinite is unmanifest in itself but the infinite being the infinite also manifests itself in infinite ways. Therefore when you see a movie on an enormous screen, whichever be the face or the feature that you focus your mind upon, there you see the screen. The road to the unmanifest is through the manifest.

So, come to this door. Knock and wait. Do you become impatient that the door doesn't open as soon as you knock? That is the ego; something that feels that it is different, distinct from the totality;

which is an absurd feeling, but it is experienced as truth. Our own daily experiences, like sleep, suggest that this experienced duality is not true.

In Vedanta there is a tradition or doctrine that any experience that is contradicted by another experience is untrue; any experience that is limited is untrue. That is quite simple. For example, if you pick up a mirror and see your face in the mirror and say, "Ah, I see my face in the mirror" and then hand the mirror to someone else, that face is gone. So it was not true to say that "My face is in the mirror." It is an impossible proposition. Even so with the false experience of duality. As long as the division between "you" and "me" persists, as long as this ego-sense persists, though you can go right up to the door and knock, it may not be opened: egoistic impatience must go, knowing that when the time is right the door will open. Not at your time, not on your terms. On whose terms is not indicated. So knock, keep knocking till your knuckles (the ego) disintegrate.

There is a little story that illustrates how the true devotee of God is never impatient and never demands anything of God:

There were two men sitting in a forest in meditation. One man had been praying for his whole lifetime - he was eighty-five. The other had been meditating for only three months. The famous sage Narada happened to pass through that forest on his way to see the Lord Visnu. Both men entreated him to ask when they might be blessed with His vision. Narada assented. When he came back he told the young man that next birth he would see God. This man became distraught and indignant, forgot all about his prayers and meditations and started beating his breast. Narada told the old man that he would have to take hundreds of births before he would receive the vision of God. The old man was delighted to know that (eventually) he would be blessed with God's vision. Narada then revealed that he had confused the two messages - it was the old man who would see God next birth. The impatient devotee would have to wait longer.

Knock, keep knocking and remember that this unmanifest being can be approached only through manifest divinity. So to begin with, try to see God in beings who are apparently divine, spiritual: the Guru, saints and sages. Then gradually expand your consciousness to see that there is something good, something great, in everyone that unique spark in each one is the road through which you reach God. Instantly all our so-called negative emotions drop away: fear, hate, ill-will, jealousy, greed. So this "I am the way," though initially might be restricted in your own consciousness to Jesus Christ, or your guru or this or that particular being, eventually acts like the yeast and begins to "rise" everything else. Then you understand the meaning of the word, maccittah: the entire consciousness is filled with an awareness of God. This is bhakti and this is also meditation.

Only when this path is trodden with great inner awareness does one realize a tremendous statement in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali which describes the path of raja yoga:

trayam ekatra samyamah (III.4)

Yama is regarded as self-discipline. Samyama-sam merely means "to perfection." Discipline to perfection, discipline which is perfect, discipline which it total, is called. samyama. But samyama, according to the Yoga Sutras, means concentration, meditation and super-consciousness rolled into one. It is discipline itself that blossoms as super-consciousness or samadhi, God-consciousness.

When there is samyama then it is also called dharma meghah samadhih. You yourself become a shower of virtue (Yoga Sutras IV.29). There is nothing but love and righteousness in you because you have sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness and it acted as the "yeast" and pervaded the entire personality.

Thus, what is known as bhakti or devotion blossoms into a mystical experience which is apparently in the field of raja yoga and you become a total yogi. That's it.

Further comments and references suggested by Father Terence:

1. This attitude is brilliantly dipicted in the Book of Wisdom: "Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life.... Before us he stands a reproof to our way of thinking, the very sight of him weighs our spirits down, his way of life is not like other men's, the paths he treads are unfamiliar." (Wisdom II, 12 and 14-15)

2. Vigilance = Christian virtue to prepare for the meeting with the Lord. Prayer is the pre-eminent means for practicing this vigil. See Mark XIII, 33-37; Luke XII, 35-40; 1 Thess. V, 2 and 6; Ephes. VI, 18.

3. 1 Thess. V, 17-18.

4. 1 Cor. VIII, 2-3.

5. John X, 9.

6. Matt. XXIV, 13.

Self-Knowledge

We have looked into the various aspects of this spiritual adventure called Yoga. There are not different yogas, though occasionally that expression is used, just as one can say that there are different limbs of the body.

You can sit and sing and dance, kneel until your knees turn blue, worship in various ways, but it would still not be bhakti yoga. You can do the most fantastic good to the world (which is very good), but it would still not be karma yoga. There is one essential element that needs to be added to these: that is the "yeast" - knowledge, understanding.

There is even an inner state called jada samadhi, a kind of psycho-physical exercise whereby you make the mind blank. It's not easy but it is not impossible and I have seen quite a few people who could do that. One man used to sit in the same posture for a minimum of three to four hours, absolutely unmoved and immovable - rain, sun, storm, nothing affected him. At the end of whatever time he had fixed for himself he would open his eyes. The first thing he did was to burst into some kind of abuse directed towards whoever was there in front of him. And if there was nobody, he went on looking straight into space scolding some imaginary person! Fantastic meditation! But there was no doubt that one could see in him all the exterior signs of samadhi. What had gone wrong? To twist the metaphor given by Jesus, it is like putting the yeast in a plastic bag or some other impermeable container, then dropping it into the dough. Nothing will happen. It will remain absolutely still, no rising, nothing. That is the kind of stillness that was there in this man. He probably started out with some kind of japa or meditation but it was "encapsuled" and didn't spread into the other aspects of his personality, and was therefore totally useless.

What is the difference between such a state and real samadhi? The actual definition of samadhi in the Yoga Sutras finds the best

illustration in this yeast story of Jesus - it is absolutely correct. The yeast becoming one with the dough has somehow changed the entire thing and that which was put into it has completely and totally lost its identity so that the two have become something that never was before. svarpua sunyamiva "non-existent self-form" (Yoga Sutras III.3). It is impossible to conceive of this, yet it is not totally alien to us, it is not a super-normal experience. We have all experienced this some time or the other and if one can look back to when it happened, it happened because the ego was suspended: in love, in fear, in panic. It happens so many times in our lives and luckily those experiences pass unnoticed because it is when you notice them that they cease. But if one can look into that memory and see- not think about see what happened, it is not difficult to discover that at that moment of great delight or ecstasy, the ego stood suspended.

When this ego stands suspended, the background of the experiencer is merged in the experience itself. And since there is no difference between the experiencer and the experience at that point, that is Yoga - complete and total union. Not union in the sense of two things coming together, but both things disappearing and leaving the experiencing alone - nothing more can be said about it. Svarupa sunyamiva: The identity of "this" and "that," (what appeared to be two a moment earlier) is totally lost and there arises... nothing arises. What is, is samadhi.

The essence of this whole thing is what is called self-knowledge. So, what is called selfless action could be mere action done in an exalted selfishness. What is called devotional practice could be practice which looks like devotion. What is called meditation or samadhi could well be some type of a samadhi, but just a "type." What is called Yoga may be going through the motions without the spirit of Yoga. And the Bible reminds you that "God is spirit" (John IV, 24), not a spirit. God is spirit and if the spirit is not there, whatever is done is done - excellent! - but it is not Yoga, not spiritual, not religious.

It is interesting that on the cross Jesus says: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke XXIII, 34) What you call sin, transgression or evil, arises because "they know not what they do." I don't know if one can draw from this an inference that if they knew, they would not do it - maybe, may not be - but the fact is they know not what they do. So even if you are doing something good, if you know not what you are doing, it is useless. Judas hanged himself because he was considered evil. You and I could be hanged because we are considered very holy, but the hanging is of a picture - hanging all the same! So this Self-knowledge is extremely important.

Can that Self-knowledge be acquired or granted by someone? No. It is a gift of God. It happens when there is complete and total self-surrender. But we can do one thing that should not be left to God or some other power: there must be a deliberate turning away from darkness towards 3 light. You have a beautiful proverb: You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink. Even if the most brilliant light is shone on your face you can close your eyes and you will be quite certain that there will be darkness. Therefore Jesus cautions, "No-one can serve two masters." (Matt. VI, 24) Turn away from one and face the other. You won't lose anything because your shadow will follow you.

That (the shadow) is what the Oriental calls your karma, your destiny. Whether you are facing the light or away from the light is the choice that one has to make. You cannot serve two masters - you cannot face light and darkness at the same time.

Once the attention is turned towards the light, naturally you proceed towards it, towards the source of that light. Here again we have a fantastic parallel between the sayings of Jesus, Krishna and Buddha. All three of them say "Come to Me." The yogi is prepared to accept the "Me" as referring not particularly to the personality called Krishna, but to the spirit that gave expression through the lips of the person called Krishna. So when Jesus says: "Come to me, all who labor and

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. XI, 28) and a yogi hears this, he finds no difficulty at all. To him it is exactly the same spirit that spoke through the personality of Krishna speaking through the personality of Christ or Buddha or somebody else.

So there is an ambivalent attitude here: that so long as the person is there, you go to him; not because this person, this body is going to save you, but the spirit that speaks through that body will save you. It is very simple and extremely practical. It reminds us of the British sayings: "The king is dead. Long live the king." The Guru is dead, but the Guru is not dead. He is there - everywhere. Find him. That Guru who appeared to my vision as Swami Sivananda is now everywhere, in all of you. "Come to me!" means face the light and move towards it. Take a few deliberate steps towards the light and once you are aware and conscious of the light, you won't want to turn away from that light towards darkness.

So Krishna says:

sarvadharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja (XVIII.66)

"Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone." Not" Mr. Krishna" - if you belong to this Krishna cult, they will probably say that unless you take refuge in Krishna you won't have salvation. Good, a marvelous idea. But then there is a serious problem- where is Krishna now? Or where is Jesus Christ or Buddha now? Unnecessarily you have to create some complication: "Christ and Krishna are all up there somewhere, waiting to descend again, and I have to recommend you to him when he descends and so you must follow me." You may not be quite prepared for that! Find him and follow him. Where is he? He is in your heart. Look for him in your heart, whatever be the method you adopt; even through hatha yoga yoga asanas and pranayama,* or by adoring Jesus, by communion with him in spirit.

"Come to me" does not necessarily imply moving towards a certain personality but moving towards the light that that personality

manifested while embodied. When the personality was in manifestation there was obviously no doubt about moving towards him. And if in your own consciousness there is no other awareness of another personality, that is, to you God means only Jesus Christ - there is absolutely no harm, go ahead, find that; instead of trying to suggest that "This is the only way and your way is not the right way." Don't worry about the other's way, keep going; don't even waste a thought on the other's way, even to say that "This is the way of the devil" - then you are looking at the devil, not yourself, not the light. If you are devoted to Krishna, go on find this Krishna in you, find this Christ in you, this Buddha in you. But remember that you cannot serve two masters - not even to think of the "other man's devil" while contemplating your "God."

There is a very serious problem here and Krishna refers to this in the Bhagavad Gita:

dvau bhutasargau loke 'smin daiva asura eva ca (XVI.6)

"There are two types of beings in this world, the divine and the demonical." There are these two tendencies built into creation, two paths along which the awareness can flow: one leading towards darkness and one leading towards light. The divine and the undivine paths. Deva really means light, and asura where there is no light. You cannot follow these two. You cannot go towards the light and at the same time move in darkness. It is not possible. Is there some kind of a supernormal, supernatural light that one must see? No. I have a much simpler way of looking at it. Do nothing in a state of confusion, in a state of unclarity. If everything that happens to you or that you do, if all experiences and expressions are absolutely clear, then you are moving in the light, towards the light. It is impossible to do something in that state and to regret.

We regret only those actions which were done in a state of unclarity. If you know exactly: "I am doing this, I am aware of the motivation, I

am aware of even the possible consequences, the entire picture" then you won't blame anybody, not even yourself. There is no sense in saying "I blame myself." That expression is meaningless. Regret, I understand, but regret implies some kind of a clever psychological attitude that says "If only I had not done that, I would have taken the other road and yet got what I wanted without getting into trouble!" (That is the "contraceptive" approach.) Without blaming others, and wi-thout blaming oneself, one remains aware that: "This is an impulse that arises. It is very strong." If it is not strong, then the very awareness of the arising of the impulse is enough to deal with it-stop it naturally. To stop it or let it go depends upon what the action is and what the awareness decides is appropriate. This happens again and again, and you observe this, becoming more and more intensely aware of it because the attention is undistracted. That is meditation, continuous meditation. That is light, un- dimmed light. It is not a static state you are able to move. Life moves, life moves you, pushes you in one direction or the other; but since you have this light "in your hands" (within you) whichever direction life moves you, it is illumined. This is precisely what Jesus suggested: "If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light." (Matt. VI, 22)

It is still possible that you commit some errors, but knowingly this time, not unknowingly - errors in the sense that they inevitably lead to their own consequences which is unhappiness. You realize that it is an impulse, a tendency that is built into the system. You are helpless. Then you try to trace your own source and you come face to face with some substance over which you have no control - all this is done in the light that shines all the time in you.

This is not an external affair. This light shines in each one of us. It is when suddenly we look to some outside agency, outside one's own consciousness, to support, guide, protect us and all the rest of it, that the attention is lost and darkness sets in. You deliberately ignore the light and look to somebody else for help. Even this is not bad, if you

realize that this somebody whom you visualize outside is in you. You can call upon Jesus Christ, Krishna, Buddha, your Guru, but that (person) is within you, not outside. Even if that person is sitting in front of you, he is still within you. It is a physiological fact. If that is realized, there is no harm in resorting to a "comforter."

There is absolutely no difficulty, no doubt, till one day the big question arises: "How does this come to an end? You are helpless and you say "God, God, please help me!" You realize that the difficulty, craving, or evil impulse that is coming up is within you, the God that you are praying to is also within you and the prayer is happening within you! It is a crazy situation, but maybe it is necessary at some point. Then you come face to face with this groundwork. It is very clear, but even that clarity does not help. That is the point where the vital questions arise: "If this is an impulse where does it arise? In me. But then why does it arise in spite of me and why is it I am not able to control it? Is there a controller, totally distinct and different from what needs to be controlled, the impulse, so that the controller could jump on the shoulders of this terrible thing that is happening?" There is no answer to that, no answer is possible. The human intellect comes to a dead end and that is called, by me, the "logical conclusion:" conclusion of logic. (Not in the sense that you argue and argue and come to an end of the argument, but it is the conclusion of logic.)

From there on there is nothing that can be done by the ego, by you. This again is emphasized by all the three Krishna, Christ and Buddha. Christ suggests again and again: "Follow Me." "Abide in Me." (John XV, 4) Krishna says: "Surrender yourself," but not prematurely. Do all that you can and when you are utterly convinced that you can't do any more, surrender yourself. Premature surrender is either impotence or arrogance. Surrender means that you have struggled and struggled hard. You have come up to this precipice, but you don't have the courage to go further. "So please give me a kick in the pants." I think He would do that!

The same factor is hinted at by the Buddha in this beautiful saying:

atta sarana bhava

atta dipa bhava

"Be your own light, take refuge in the Self, not in anyone else, turn towards this light within." That is God. This light shines in you all the time, even when you are doing what you consider evil. Is it possible that if there is clarity you would not do that? I am bold enough to say that even if there is this clarity you might still do what you are doing, (for God's will cannot be defied) - although that is putting the cart before the horse. Find this inner light first then "All these things shall be yours as well." (Matt. VI, 33)

Let there be this total inner clarity all the time. In that clarity you will realize that there is one point beyond which you cannot go. At that point it becomes necessary for surrender. Surrender is symbolized in the crucifixion. Even then, right till the last moment there is a suggestion that maybe without this surrender "I" can participate in this cosmic being (ref. Luke XXII, 42). It is a fantastic trick that the ego plays in that last-ditch attempt to save itself. There is still clarity, but even that clarity is unable to dispel this "primordial ignorance" mulavidya which is comparable to the blueness of the sky. However good your eyesight, however brilliant your intellect, and even if you have been to the moon and back and seen that there is nothing blue there, look up, you will still see blue. This is called maya. This primordial ignorance is not your creation and therefore cannot be brought to an end by you.

As Jesus says: "The cup that I drink you will drink... but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant." (Mark X, 39-40) Surrender is like dying, but dying with a hope at heart of rising up to heaven or getting eternal life or being born in better circumstances is not dying. That is a mere heart transplant from one body to another what they call "reincarnation." Dying is to die totally and completely.

If that sentence doesn't have a full stop after it then the ego immediately asks: "What then?" What then? - you are still dead! Surrender is so difficult, so strange for the human ego even to conceive of.

Most people believe that human beings are superior to animals. I do not believe this. When sheep are taken to the abbatoir, they just stick their necks out to be slaughtered. Can a human being do that? Totally, without any expectation whatsoever?? When the human mind looks at that phenomenon it thinks the sheep is a brainless, stupid thing. We think our intelligence lies in struggling to live, struggling for survival. We don't survive. Nobody survives.

So it is this terrible misunderstanding of ego that wants to persist in that misunderstanding and will not give up even if it is very clear that its existence is the cause of its own sorrow; that veil of misunderstanding is removed only by God's grace and not by any amount of self effort. Even if enlightenment appears to drop into one's lap, it is grace only.

Finally, since it is so, and since we are in a paradoxical situation where you and I are asked to struggle and struggle, to crucify the ego, the mind and the flesh, to come right up to that and drink of this cup of crucifixion, the question naturally arises in the immature mind that looks at this apparent phenomenon: "I will do that if you will please guarantee that you will take me..." Where?

Again there are two parallel sayings in the Gita and the Bible. You can interpret them in any manner you like: "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you... I will pray the Father and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (John XIV, 16-18) And in the Bhagavad Gita Krishna tells us that if you cannot reach the goal right now, strive, strive hard and then you will be given another

chance to proceed from where your are towards enlightenment. (ref. VI.43). It is in that understanding or realization of the Holy Spirit that the total merger of what is called human consciousness with cosmic consciousness lies. Suddenly you realize at one point, when this Holy Spirit, this Self- knowledge descends into you, that "That which I called myself is the breath of God breathed into me" (ref. Genesis II, 7). "This is not my breath, it is His breath and therefore this is not my life, it was His life all the time. Stupidly I thought it was me. It is not me." This understanding, as distinct from an idea or a philosophy, arises when the veil is withdrawn by God Himself.

Having breathed the breath of life into the first man it is perhaps God who willed that he should regard himself as somebody, something independent of the totality called God. The final resolution of that mystery is also His - but it will happen. When that understanding that, "Even if I am breathing at all it is not I who am breathing, the breath of life was breathed into me by the Divine," then Yoga takes place. What was considered "me," "my consciousness," "my individuality," "my personality," suddenly... how can you verbalize that? It doesn't become ONE with the cosmic being, with God, but it is one with God. There are absolutely no words to describe that. That which was God, is God and will be God (which is the exact translation of the Hebrew word which is anglicized into Yahweh, Jehovah ref. Exodus III, 14), "came to me because I felt I was distinct and totally different from that cosmic being: come to me as the Guru, as Christ, as Krishna, as Buddha, in order to lead me on to this path and provided me with a comforter which is an inner inspiration the Holy Spirit." (ref. John XIV, 16-17). In that inspiration there is a revelation the veil is lifted, not by "me," or by "my" effort, but the veil is lifted and it instantly becomes clear that God, Guru and Self are one:

isvaro gururatmeti murti bhedavidhagine

"God, Guru and Self pervade all, though seeming to be divided."

There is a telephone booth installed in a hall. These three spaces seem to be factually separate: the space inside the telephone booth, the hall-space and the outside space. You are standing outside when suddenly there is an earthquake and the whole thing is shaking, the whole thing collapses and suddenly you realize that space was never cut up. The inside space has not become one with the outside space, but "inside" and "outside" were just ideas. When those ideas collapsed, nothing happened - but everything happened at the same time.

Further references suggested by Father Terence:

1. John IV, 23-24; 1 Cor. II, 10-13.

2. Ephes. II, 4-8.

3. John III, 19-21.

4. Father Terence offers two very pertinent refs. in this regard: 1 Cor. IX, 24-27; 1 Cor. VI, 19-20.

5. Matt. V, 14-16.

6. Jeremiah XXIX, 12-14.

7. Christ as the lamb: Isaiah LIII, 7.

Discard Mental Furniture

Religion is supposed to promote peace. If it has not, where have we failed? Has religion failed us, or have we failed religion? That is a simple question. If I am sure that I eat in order to appease my hunger and if what I eat does not serve that purpose, then either it is not food or I am not eating and digesting it -something is wrong between us. Religion is meant to promote peace and harmony. One of the titles conferred upon Jesus Christ by man is that he is the Prince of Peace. If religion means harmony, peace, why is it that we have not found it in religion, through religion? Why is it that we have been subjected to this criticism that it is religion that creates trouble? Where have we gone wrong? What is peace? What is harmony? What is religion?

First of all, I feel that in our mutual eagerness to tell one another what to do there seems to be some mistake.2 When it comes to saying, "Be truthful," "Be non-violent," "Be kind," "Love one another," what do we do? Do we digest this truth, digest this message? Or do we try to impress others saying that "You must be like this?" This is a favorite pastime, especially in India. In India, wherever you go, lay people, non-religious people, tell the religious people how they should behave. And the religious people tell the lay people how they must behave. In this itself there is trouble.

When it comes to goodness, when it comes to the true spirit of religion, we are more eager to find it in others than in ourselves. This has unfortunately become a slogan. Everyone has come to live up to the same idea - that "It is my business to make others good. It does not matter what I am but in the name of God, in the name of religion, in the name of my guru, my teacher, my prophet, I preach the word of God, the message of God - I am serving the Lord in this manner. It does not matter at all how I live or what I do." Somehow or other this spirit seems to be more infectious than the spirit of religion. We are quite convinced that "However wicked or vicious I am, if I have contributed

in some measure to religion in all of you, then I have served my purpose."

There is a lovely little story told in India. A minister challenged the king and said "Your Majesty! Do you think your people love you? Some are afraid of you but most of them hate you; none of them loves you." The king got terribly cross and said "I'll chop off your head if you don't prove this." The minister said "Give me a little time." The minister had a beautiful plan. He had it announced:

"Tomorrow is His Majesty's birthday and he wants to perform a special ceremony which involves the use of a phenomenal quantity of milk. Those citizens who really love the king, please contribute your share of milk. There is no compulsion at all, it is a freewill love offering. We are going to place a few tall drums around the palace, you will be able to ascend a few steps and pour your contribution into the drum. The king will of course be seated there watching." Well, the drums were placed around the palace. Streams of people came the next day and queued up. The procession ended and the king asked, "Now, what are you going to do with all the milk?" The minister replied, "We'll give that to the poor people, don't get excited. Let's go down." They both went down and climbed up the ladder and opened one drum. Plain water. The king said "What is this? There is something wrong, let us look into the next drum." Again, plain water. They went round the palace but all the drums were full of water. The king was really shocked. "Is this what all those people brought?" The minister said, "Yes, you know why? Everyone who came had exactly the same thought: "Ten thousand people are going to pour milk into those drums and if I pour a bucket of water, who is going to notice it? The king will see me there and so my loyalty, my love for the king has been confirmed!"" I often wonder if that is our problem. We think "I'm alright, I've shown myself, my face in the church."

On the other hand we might adopt the attitude of a young Jewish religious student who got married. A neighbour asked him "What are

you going to do now?" He said, "I am going to study religion!" "Hah! But what about your father's business, your grandfather's business?" He said, "Sir, I will explain to you. My father had three brothers and his father told him, 'Oh you know I'd very much like to study religion, the Torah, the Bible and so on. But, you know, if I didn't work and earn, these boys would starve. And so for the sake of my children, I have sacrificed my religious aspirations and gone into business to earn some money so that my children can become religious, learn religion.' What did his father do? Exactly the same thing. This has been going on for five generations." Somewhere, someone has to break the vicious circle of trusting that everyone else will become religious, that it is my business to promote everybody else's religiosity.

Why do people tell lies and cheat? Why are people so violent, irreligious and un-Christian? The answer that people give you daily is "Such is life!" If I'm not beating everybody else up, I myself would be destroyed." It is then that we might look at the symbol of self-sacrifice, of Jesus on the cross, and derive one small lesson from it: "What does it matter if I am destroyed? Does it matter at all? Is it so terribly important that I should continue to be? Physically, I am not immortal, eternal, so let me break out of this vicious circle of expecting others to be good. Let this whole spirit of religion possess me." If one is able to say this to oneself, then the true religious spirit is awakened. Then we say, "But what about my friends, my family, my business? What about my society?" They will probably look after themselves much better. Can they save me? No. In the inner courtyard of religion this spirit is there asking, "Are you dependent upon me or am I dependent upon you?" No, neither. Someone said "Follow me." It sounds very easy, but is it so easy to follow someone? If one uses the excuse - "I'm not free, I'm not independent spiritually, because I have all these followers" - is that true? I think one has to remember the life of Jesus Christ.

When I was in Jerusalem, my host took me to see a beautiful church built on the spot where (in orthodox terms) St. Peter was converted.

The church is called Peter of Gallicanto and we were shown around by a very delightful young minister. As we were taking leave of him this young minister said, "You know, just as I've read the New Testament, I've also read some Indian scriptures and Buddhist scriptures. I find there is not much that is unique in their teachings that is not found in the teachings of Jesus Christ. I said "But in Christ there is something which is really inspiring." "And what is that?" "That here was a man, a prophet, a son of God, whatever you wish to call him, who did not forsake the spirit of religion even when his closest friends and disciples turned against him. Not deserted him - turned against him. That is a very stiff test. How many of us would measure up to that?" So must I bring this as an excuse, that I have followers to look after and that in order to do it, I may have to compromise? No, rather let the spirit of religion prevail, whatever be the cost. Maybe neither I am so important, nor what I regard as my mission. It is the spirit of religion that is important. If we had understood this and made it a living truth in us, religion would not have failed us and we would not have failed it. Then it is possible for us to discover the peace that religion promises.

What I am trying to convey is that we have never been religious. I wear these robes, what do they mean? Nothing. Inside there may be a rogue. People ask me, "What are these orange robes?" If I want to be polite, I tell them "They are a sort of uniform. So that as I walk along the road, you will know that it is a swami. Nothing more." Instead of worrying about all these forms and formalities, can I recapture and preserve the spirit of religion? Can I visualize Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, standing there and talking to me, talking not as a routine ritual but as a living truth? Can I drink of the fountain of living water, of truth? Can I do this, not being bothered by my own little business and my own little life, not being worried about what my friends and followers say and do; knowing that they will do what they want to do anyway; so

why should I not do what I want to do? Why should I not drink of this, digest this, assimilate this?

Having truly assimilated the spirit of religion, it may be possible for me to transmit it to someone else. Then there is peace, instantly. I have got rid of what I am fond of calling "junk!" Junk number one is "my" sense of responsibility. You may say that "I am responsible for my wife and children," but are you? Look at your wife - she was born before you married her - how are you responsible for her? What is responsibility? Look at the children. Are you responsible for them? Perhaps yes, it is because you married their mother that they were born. Children are not really born of you, they are born. If you have a heart attack now and by some magic you see death knocking, can you say "Wait! The children are small, I have a responsibility to them. Come later!" I have seen orphans. After the Muslim-Hindu riots in North India many of these children were left fatherless, motherless, but they did not perish. Some did; some do, anyway. It is this false sense of responsibility that worries us. Realize your state when you feel that the family, business, and YOU YOURSELF are all His responsibility He is the Creator and Preserver. You will be ever happy and active.

The moment all the junk, all the psychological furniture is thrown out, then immediately there is freedom, peace. There is a beautiful saying in the Bhagavad Gita:

tyagac chantir anantaram (XII.12)

"Peace immediately follows renunciation." "Discard this mental furniture, this junk" - that very moment you have peace.

It is not work or life that is bothersome, it is that imaginary sense of responsibility with its imaginary self- esteem or self-importance that creates fear and worry. When that is discarded, by the rising of the spirit of true religion, immediately there is freedom, peace, harmony. Such a life is a blessing.

Then you do not have to sit and talk. In India many holy men do not talk at all. When this spirit of religion is kindled in one's heart, then in that person's very presence there is an infection of that religious spirit.

A very holy man of India called Kabir remarked, "Get close to these men of God, men of religion, in whom the spirit of religion is alive. You will also derive peace and freedom and, because their spirit is infectious, you will be infected, even if they do not look at you, do not talk to you." Is it possible that by sitting at his feet you can become infected by the spirit of religion? Kabir declares "If a virus or germ has such power, then what about a spiritual being?" If sick men have the power to infect you with their sickness, why cannot the holy man infect you with his holiness?

If only the spirit of religion can be kindled as one candle is kindled from another in the Easter ceremony, then there is peace, freedom and harmony within one's own heart, and it is possible to transmit it from one to the other.

Further comments and references by Father Terence:

1. Peace was the greeting of the Risen Christ to his disciples (John XX, 19 & 21).

2. The burden of the Pharisees: ref. Matt. XXIII, 2-4 and 13ff.

3. Again Jesus attacks the "religiosity" of the Pharisees who are caught up with the need "to be seen:" Matt VI, 1-21.

4. Parallel with the Mary and Martha story: Luke X, 38-42.

5. Christ, the model of faith - Phil. II, 5-11. The true Christian, faithful to the spirit of religion, is called to be a bearer of peace by making it of his/her life and by allowing it to be seen by others. We witness to the peace we share with God in our fidelity to His spirit. Ref. James III, 17-18 and Col. III, 12-15.

Descent of Wisdom

Is the descent of wisdom spontaneous, or are there pre-conditions? No-one really knows. However, on scriptural authority one might say that there is a period of preparation and that preparation applies to all - whether it has a causal connection with what follows, or whether these two are unconnected events. Like marrying and having a baby. Everyone who marries does not have a baby, and yet if you do not have a relationship you cannot have a baby. It's a double negative. It is not as though this must lead to the other, but without this that may not happen. Similarly, without the preparation, that enlightenment experience may not happen.

This problem is discussed at great length in the Yoga Vasistha where the Master says that by and large one has to pass through all these stages in order to reach what is known as enlightenment. But in the case of some it seems to just drop from the sky, whether or not it is deserved - there are no questions asked. So we find rather intriguing instances of someone being "forcibly enlightened," if one can use such an expression.

There is a story of a very great saint in South India who didn't want to tread the spiritual path at all, who had no use for any of these things, but grace took him by the scruff of the neck and said, "Go on! This is your path." your path." When you cannot explain a thing like this, and when there is an inner compulsion to explain it, you invoke the theory of a previous incarnation in which this man had struggled and struggled and did all sorts of things. So in this birth he was born on the precipice. Tip, and he was off. But we still don't know.

We are bound by no cord, we are trapped in total freedom, and we suffer in a sea of supreme bliss. How does it happen? No one knows. Are we bound to this body in some way or the other? Where is the cord, where are the shackles? You don't find any.

It is rather interesting that the one thing all of us love to do and the one thing whose deprivation means torture, is sleep. In that state there is an obvious experience of a "looseness;" there is no bondage. If you are bound to the body, you couldn't be freed from that body-consciousness in sleep. Yet you are. Again, there are moments when suddenly the body consciousness is transcended, when the body which seems to have a stranglehold on our awareness, appears to disintegrate spontaneously and completely. In a state of panic, excitement or total fear, the bonds are loosened again. That makes you wonder, "Is there a bond at all?" But right now there seems to be, and yet we all long for freedom from this bondage, a bondage that in reality does not exist but which is constantly experienced.

Now what on earth is going to resolve this non-existent problem, this phantom pain? In order to kill it you do something to dull your sense of awareness, to distract the mind-not from the understanding of the truth that there is no bondage, but from the experienced situation of being limited, being bound otherwise the mind constantly broods on that. When all these so-called spiritual practices are indulged in as a matter of blind routine, they are mere bandaids. They are very good, I am not discouraging them, because although they do not directly give you the enlightenment experience, without them the enlightenment experience may not be had.

Eventually you may discover that all these innumerable spiritual practices slowly push you towards the precipice, in order that you may eventually at some point take a leap into the beyond. You cannot argue that since taking this final leap is the thing that is indicated so, "Why should I do all this?" because you have to reach that precipice in order to take the leap.

The scriptures provide a map. What is a map? The path that has been trodden by others, by which they reached a certain destination. It merely indicates that if you want to go from here to there you might follow this path. But nothing stops you from beating your own path,

creating a Neither the scriptures and all the practices that we indulge in, nor their abandonment will enable us to realize the Truth, the Self, God. What is needed is a constant vigilant inquiry into whatever we are doing, and doing everything intelligently.

But initially, at the onset of the spiritual quest, how does one find "a chink in the wall?" Normally the ego is absolutely self-sufficient, very secure, more solid than a wall. It knows what is right, what is not right, there are no doubts, but... There are no doubts only when things are flowing smoothly. When everything is going fine, it is fantastic. But a problem arises in life (and thank God these problems are brought into our lives) and the whole thing crumbles, because the ego has no foundation. In a paradoxical way it (the ego) depends upon its own acceptance for its existence. Therefore it is a completely self-contained myth. How is a chink formed in that wall? No one has been able to provide a satisfactory answer to this.

There is a tremendous statement in the Bhagavad Gita:

api cet sudura caro bhajate mam ananyabhak

sadhur eva sa mantavyah samyag vyavasito hi sah

ksipram bhavati dharmatma sasvacchantim nigacchati

kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati (IX.30-31)

"Even if the worst sinner worships Me, with devotion to none else, he too should indeed be regarded as rightous, for he has rightly resolved. Soon he becomes righteous and attains to eternal peace: O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee is never destroyed." "If the worst rascal turns to God and worships Him, he will instantly become a "3 saint." Why will that worst rascal worship God? Why will a confirmed criminal want to confess all his sins? How does the spiritual thirst arise in a person? What makes that chink in the wall? Satsanga (company of the truth). But why will you go to the satsanga? If you are an egotist and you are quite secure in your own ego and all its

ramifications- wife, children, money, house, etc. then why will you attend a satsang? There is absolutely no clear answer to that question.

Once that first hole is drilled, you look through it and the very act of looking beyond "the wall" enlarges that hole, until you suddenly realize that the wall wasn't there at all! So, the whole thing is a complete and total mystery.

In the same way, the other point of view is also not very satisfactory: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark X, 25) Maybe. But does that mean that all poor people will automatically enter the kingdom of heaven? No. Poverty is a curse according to some, wealth is a curse according to others - both are right.

Are there definite criteria to say that this will lead you there and that will not lead you there? No. Holy men have fallen from the penultimate step. How did that happen? Is it possible that someone who thought he was nearly there - only thought he was nearly there? Is it possible that the other person whom society considered as the worst scoundrel was very close to God in his own heart? What are the criteria for God's grace? And who lays down these criteria? You? A human being? Are we so high and so great that we can determine what God shall do and shall not do? These are very pertinent, serious and impossible questions.

It is possible that there may be spontaneous enlightenment. It is possible that the veil of ignorance just burns up spontaneous combustion. You do nothing. You just look at it. But if somehow by God's grace or disgrace it doesn't happen, you had better get going and do something - walk over to the precipice. They say that unless you have taken every step towards the precipice deliberately, with great inner awareness, even if you get there, you may still turn back and take another route.

You must wake up to the realization that whatever you thought was true is not true. All these are based on a certain truth which is not obvious. What was obvious is not true and what is true has not been obvious.

The whole problem hinges on this one issue and that is, "What is this ego and what does it do?" But we often begin by asking, "How to 'get rid of or weaken the ego?"

The sadhana (practice) Jesus undertook of fasting for forty days5 has also been undertaken by a number of great saints and sages. In connection with that there is a parallel quotation from the Bhagavad Gita:

visaya vinivartante niraharasya dehinah

rasavarjam raso by asya param drstva nivartate (II.59)

"The objects of the senses turn away from the obstinate man, leaving the longing (behind); but his longing also turns away on seeing the Supreme." The attraction of the objects of the senses or the objects of experience is weakened by nirahara. Niraharasya means "in the case of one who goes without food." But the food here does not mean merely the food that you eat but the fuel which keeps all these faculties going - the sense experiences, the thoughts, the psychological and emotional experiences. When this fuel is withdrawn, the ego is greatly weakened, "but the taste lingers." It is like the bed bugs in winter. You think they are completely finished. Where there was a whole colony of bedbugs, there is now nothing, just slough. You leave it there and one rain, one shine, ZZZP! Just one bite and they are back to their old form. So when the senses and mind are starved, they seem to have died out. But be careful, that taste is still there. "That taste goes only when the Supreme is seen." This is hinted at in the famous temptation story. If fasting is also accompanied by prayer and meditation, obviously the truth is seen and there is "untemptability." You don't return to this ego trip again.

But if the fasting was merely a starvation you might appear to be a great yogi, but one little temptation and you fall.

If the person who is so tempted is wise, he realizes that though he switched off the food intake, he hadn't paid any attention to the seat of those cravings. It is not the temptations that tempt you but you tempt temptations to tempt you. Temptation cannot tempt you unless you are looking in that direction. You look in that direction because the inner psychic instrument that flows in that direction has not been treated. The attempt has been to switch off the input, so everything seems to be fine. But the temptability is still there, the source of craving is still there, and until that is also disposed of you are not at the precipice.

A powerful input, what is called a temptation, sense experience, reveals the experiencer in a very subtle or not so subtle way. Even while you are enjoying the object of sense, can you remain aware of the source of the pleasure or pain? That which experiences pleasure or pain is the bondage. If it is real, the bondage is real; if it is not real, well of course, bye bye. Now the fasting starts. You withdraw the mind from the source of pleasure. Why only pleasure? It is only pleasure that distracts the mind and draws it out. Pain does not do that. While experiencing that pleasure, is it possible to look at that experiencer? That is the problem. To do this with a pleasure experience is hard, but with a pain experience it is much easier. When you switch off the input it becomes painful at some point. When you starve yourself - whether it means not taking food or denying yourself certain pleasures, which might even be considered natural - then you see the cravings arise. The craving is the relic of memory, of past experience that wants to become an experiencer again. It is not strong at all - it is the thought that gives it all its strength.

Now the "chink" gets a little wider and you are able to see beyond and eventually the whole thing collapses.

What you see into the chink is not what you see, but what is there.

Further references and comments by Father Terence:

1. The Christian example of Paul on the Road to Damascus: Acts IX, 1-30.

2. Vigilance is also a typically Christian virtue that helps in resisting temptation in order to prepare for the meeting with the Lord (ref. Mark XIII, 33-37). Prayer is the pre-eminent means for practicing the vigil of the will. Vigilance is necessary for the acquisition of wisdom (ref. Wis. VI, 15; Prov. VIII, 34; Sirach IV, 11-12). Especially ref. 1 Thess. V, 1 and 6.

3. Example of the rascal recognizing God Luke XXIII,

39-43.

4. Ref. Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke XVIII, 9-14.

5. See Luke IV, 1-13. Ancient practice in Catholic tradition of Mortification - root of word is mors/mortis death.

The practice of dying to self.

Let's Face It

I thought that this time we should contemplate one of the fundamental views of Hazrat Inyat Khan.

It has been the vision of many of the supreme masters, who have directly perceived the truth or reality, that they did not function of the basis of either-or. None of these great masters have really striven to convert anyone from one faith or one belief to another. Jesus said this very beautifully, "I have not come to destroy." Krishna pointed to the same beautiful truth when in the Bhagavad Gita he insists; "na buddhibhedam janayed." Never disturb anyone's belief. They did not work on the principle that it is either-or, that either you are right or I am right - and of course I am right and that means that your are not right.

In the same manner these great masters did not think in terms of either unity or diversity. Most of them did not even try to bring about what we consider a reconciliation between these two. Is it even necessary for us, if we do not want to choose between these two, to struggle to reconcile unity and diversity? When do we want to bring about a reconciliation? When we find there is a conflict. Is there a conflict between unity and diversity? Where there is no conflict there is no need for a reconciliation, but there may be need for choosing one or the other. Now we are also going to look into that factor - is it necessary to choose between unity and diversity? When you make a choice you imply thereby that one is superior to the other. As a matter of fact the great masters have never indulged in this contest - what is superior and what is inferior. That is the sign of a master. He leaves things as they are and reveals the spirit in all of them. This is not really unity in diversity. These are there but there is a unity of spirit underlying all this diversity.

There's a bit of a snag here - that while seeming to accept all, you accept none and you are creating something new. This has

unfortunately been the passion of those who profess to follow the great masters. One of the other great masters of India, called Shuddhananda Bharati, says they are not followers, they are swallowers. There are no followers but they who come after the great masters are swallowers. I look at this word, I listen to it and I see that if you follow somebody you "fall low." Why do you want to fall low, why don't you become the master himself? Then you don't fall low, you imbibe the spirit of the master and while doing so you discover that to the master there was no difficulty in seeing diversity as diversity and unity as unity. He saw no conflict between them to reconcile and he saw no superiority or inferiority between them to force him to choose one and reject the other.

The truth is so simple and in truth there is no conflict or problem. Truth does not create a problem. Conversely, only that which does not create a problem or a conflict within you is true. If it creates a conflict within you then, naturally, such a conflict extends from you to others, placing you in a situation of conflict all your lifetime, that is not true whatever it be. That alone is true which does not create a conflict within yourself or between you and others. There is absolutely no problem in truth - truth is. And yet we have made diversity a problem, we have made even unity a problem because we think unity can arise only when all this diversity has been abolished or somehow reconciled.

If we transplant ourselves in spirit to the battlefield and listen to Krishna, in his message there is absolutely no problem. It is crystal clear. He does not say that this teaching is superior to the teachings of Christ or Buddha. Listen very carefully here, he does not even say that this is the same as the teachings of Christ or Buddha. This is the teaching. This is the truth. Then we transplant ourselves in spirit to a remote corner of India where Buddha addressed the assembled monks. There again the same truth emerges but not the same. It is Buddha's message. Then we transplant ourselves to Galilee and listen

to the teachings of Jesus Christ. There again the truth is revealed. Between one and the other there is no conflict and there is no anxiety to reconcile one with the other. Truth can shine as the sun shines, without entering into conflict, without needing reconciliation and without proclaiming superiority or inferiority.

But in our case diversity is a problem because we are unable to see diversity without somehow judging. That's the problem and that's why Jesus Christ said, "Judge not." But we are fond of judging I look at two bodies, naturally these bodies are different, but having seen that, I can't stop there - I have to say he looks healthier, wiser, cleverer than the other, it's always comparing, always judging, always distorting. Can I not see these two men just exactly as they are? Why not? That's our problem. If we can avoid this judgment and merely become aware of diversity, it's possible that we shall really and truly believe or enter into the spirit of creation and see that this is the most beautiful bouquet that God's own energy, shakti, offers to Him in adoration. There is absolutely no conflict or problem in this.

Is it possible to abolish this diversity? No, absurd. People have tried this from time immemorial. The followers have always tried this joke. When a teaching appeals to someone, it is not always the spirit of the teaching that appeals to him. That someone has his own axe to grind and so on. If somebody's teaching appeals to you, go ahead, saturate yourself in that teaching. It is not even necessary for you to understand and appreciate someone else's teaching. It is quite possible that if you, in your own heart, in your own soul, embody that teaching, you will find your reflection in all. It is possible that if you are a true christian you might find that your friend who is a total buddhist is your own reflection, except that he doesn't seem to pronounce "Christ" very well, he calls it, "Buddha!" And therefore you don't want to convert anyone, you don't want to transform, reform, lead, mislead. All these things don't arise at all because you already see in the other person a perfect reflection of yourself. In exactly the same

way as you have two eyes, two ears, one mouth, one nose, you look at the other person and find the same thing. You are not interested in changing all that. You recognize his as a human being- as YOU are. If you are a human being.

It is something else that seems to disturb, that wants to bring about a unity in this diversity so that the other person may follow me, not so much the master. If you follow my master you are my brother but I want somehow to make you conform to a system of which I am the head. This is where all our systems go wrong. There is nothing wrong with systems either. As long as life continues to operate on this earth there will be systems. Just as there will be diversity. That is how the universe has been created and nobody is going to change it. As long as the human being is able to think, that thought will create systems. This also cannot be avoided. Isms, cults and sections will continue to proliferate. No one has been able to find a remedy for this diversity because this diversity does not need a remedy and therefore it resists all remedies.

Everyone who has tried to abolish this diversity has added one more to it. If you look around at the present-day religious scene you will see this very clearly. There are at least five or six universal religious movements. I am not criticizing any movement or anything - as I say, these are inevitable. You can see this for instance in the Indian movements. Buddha's teaching was very simple, very clear, but then the followers started APPLYING Buddha's teachings to the conditions prevailing in India at that time, saying that you should not do that, you should not belong to this school of philosophy, you must belong to Buddha's school. Buddha himself is no more and so you must follow me and then we will abolish all the caste systems, we will abolish all these pernicious elements that prevail in the Hindu system and there will be one Sankhara. Marvelous. And so what happens? Within minutes we hold a council. You don't agree with what I say, she has some other view - three systems come out. We are all very powerful,

highly intellectual people, logicians, charismatic, and so each one gathers his or her own crowd and different schools are created. So that today there are as many conflicting and warring sects amongst these major religious groups as there were before they were ever founded.

Can we go to the root of this problem and not merely try to cosmetically treat it? Is it possible for us to look round with both our eyes open but without accepting or rejecting, without judging one to be right and therefore the other to be wrong? Is it possible for us to observe and to see that what is called diversity and what is called unity are two sides of the same coin? As long as the coin lasts the two sides are inevitable. You may be able to split a piece of cardboard into several pieces and it is possible that you can keep on splitting it into finer and finer paper, but you will never be able to make the paper have only one side, it will always have two sides. These two sides are unity and diversity. the world has been created on the principle of diversity and there is absolutely nothing the matter with this diversity - it is as it is.

A few days ago we were walking along the seashore and I was observing the wild flowers and plants, they were most gorgeous and beautiful. There you see diversity, but one doesn't try to suppress the other. diversity is nature, nature is diversity. But no quite. The other side of this coin is unity. What is unity? We observe diversity. This is a girl and that is a boy, this is obvious. It is from this obvious truth that we begin our inquiry into this mystery of unity and diversity. This is a girl and that is a boy, or this is a carpet and these are bricks, now we begin to inquire into the nature of this diversity. Who created this diversity, and when does this diversity become a problem for us to have to deal with? Why do we have to deal with this diversity? Why are we here discussing this problem at all? If it is not a problem we would not be here discussing it.

Does diversity itself create a problem? Then the inquiry flows in a different direction, takes on a very different quality. While you are aware of diversity your awareness flows towards those objects and recognizes them as a carpet, bricks, shoes, men and women, chairs, and becomes aware of diversity. There is the ever-present danger in that awareness of judgment, appreciation, criticism, conflict and all the rest of it also arising. One recognizes that Is it inevitable? This is a carpet, these are bricks, shoes, human beings, chairs. Suddenly a question arises, a quest arises. The carpet didn't tell me, "I am a carpet." I called it a carpet, I called these bricks, I called this a building. What is this phenomenon that thus christens all these objects and calls them by various names? What is it in me that calls these objects by various names and then creates a diversity of a different sort? The first form of diversity has been created by God and in that there is no problem. Now we are inquiring into the second phase - you can spell it phase or face - of diversity which seems problematic, which is the creator of all problems. That is, it's a sort of diversity that I have created. I call this a carpet or those bricks and then somewhere within me there is a computer which works out the comparative values and determines that this is more important than that, that is more valuable than this, etc. etc. That is the diversity that is dangerous. A danger to harmony and the source of all conflict and therefore problems. Who creates them and what are these diversities?

The external diversity is there, but there is a conceptual diversity, a subjective diversity and this subjective diversity is always in terms of right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, superior and inferior and all the rest of it. Who is the creator of that diversity? As you go deeper and deeper and deeper into this question you inevitably arrive at an extremely simple answer, that, "I have never bothered to understand what exists, even including this diversity in nature. I have never tried to understand, to look for what it is. I have completely ignored it and I have created 'my own world."" Out of

ignorance comes this thing called "my own world." Remember that. Whether it is wilful ignorance or careless ignorance, this "my own world" of diversity is born of a complete and total ignorance of the factual diversity that exists in this world. This "my own world" of diversity is fictitious.

There is beauty in nature, there are some things which are universally beautiful- a brilliant sunrise for instance. That thing has been created by God, the other thing is self-created. When you ignore that beauty, the diversity that is, God's creation, then you create an internal diversity which is the source of all problems. This is beauty and you run after it, that is ugly and you reject it. You consider this good and seek it, you consider that evil and run away from it and there you are torn into a thousand pieces.

Is it possible, as you investigate this phenomenon of diversity, to appreciate that all these are conceptual, unreal? Thereby arises a tremendous revelation - truth does not cause a conflict or become a problem. The factual diversity in nature is no problem at all but this inner diversity that I have created, is a problem. It is born of ignorance of the truth concerning diversity in nature or natural diversity. This diversity with all its judgmental factors, evaluating factors and so on is born of that ignorance, is "my own world" and that is the source of all my unhappiness, sorrow and conflict.

Thank God that this inner world is not real. It is a problem because it is born of something that is not real and when this is seen directly, that very moment it disappears. It is a problem because it is based on unreality, the unreal does not exist and therefore it ceases to be a problem. Do you see this? One step further and you realize that this awareness which became aware of the diversity in nature and which then became aware of the problems that "my own world" created and thus dispelled them, this awareness IS and this awareness knits together all these diverse phenomena in the whole universe. It enters into them and those phenomena are reflected in it. That is unity. There

is a unity, there is this oneness of awareness in which the entire diversity is reflected. That is one and that alone is one. That consciousness or awareness is indivisible. In this indivisible consciousness everything is reflected. That diversity is reflected in this consciousness. Consciousness exists but not independent of this diversity. Diversity exists but not independent of this consciousness. The two are two sides of the same coin, one complementary to the other and therefore without any conflict whatsoever.

Then we learn how to live in love. Life has to go on with its diverse functions. You and I have to do all sorts of things from morning till night, but that life of diverse activity is also flavored by love which seems to link all these diverse activities in life. Once again we discover that there is diversity and unity. You know, even in relationships, especially domestic relationships, we have all sorts of crazy ideas - that we should never quarrel with each other, never have hot words. Never is never right, always is always wrong! Why shouldn't we, with the greatest joy and affection, tease each other, even disagree with each other. Must we always agree with each other because we love each other?

Is it possible for the thread of love to bring together all these various beings, different colors, different textures? One does not even feel the need for the abolition of diversity or the forgetting of the unity. Unity cannot be forgotten. If unity is forgotten and you get lost in this diversity, then you create problems out of that diversity. If the diversity itself becomes absolute, it causes a headache because the next moment you have to say that one is superior to the other, one is different from the other. So, this diversity has to be seen, observed, realized, simultaneously with the other side of the coin which is the unity of consciousness, intelligence, cosmic being. When the two are seen together, it is then that true love arises which is capable of loving in all circumstances. The circumstances and appearances will be

diverse and yet this thread of love can be unbroken. That I feel, is the essential quest of all truly religious people in this world.

Part II

QUESTIONS

God and Truth

Q. What is God in your view?

Swami: What IS is God! Hence, perhaps the Sanskrit for God is Isa which is perhaps synonymous for Is [var] a. However, before we jump to any conclusions we should ask ourselves the right question. Is what I am seeing in front of me something which IS or something which appears to be or a mere projection of my mind desire, hope, fear, etc.? Do I see what is, as it is? Can the finite mind ever grasp the Infinite, can the conditioned mind see anything as it is, unconditioned? Does not the mind by its very act of seeing project its own preconception on to what is? Hence, I feel God is transcendental.

That which IS, is everywhere at all times. And by the mere fact of His omnipresence, God is the indweller. Not in the sense of coffee in the cup, but in the sense of space "in" a room. Room or no room, space does not undergo diminution, division or change. And this omnipresence is most easily accessible "within" oneself. God is immanent. Again, when we look without bias at what is, we realize that there is infinite variety in creation diversity without disharmony. In this diversity we often see forces which have diametrically opposite natures for example, water and fire, both of which are parts of one creation. In the same way there are apparently contradictory forces in our own body which in fact are complementary.

The world, too, is made up of such complementary forces which apparently look like contradictory forces. When their complementary nature is realized, there is harmony. Otherwise, there is disharmony. Harmony is the synthesis of opposites, where the two forces achieve their complementary character. It is the subtle middle path.

But the pendulum never pauses in the middle! Hence, in the world there is constant swinging of forces, one way or the other. It is hard to realize the harmony. Such harmony alone IS. Hence, God who is supreme harmony, bursts into manifestation as an avatara (Krishna,

Buddha, Jesus, Moses, Muhammad) in order to restore the realization of harmony, to enable us to realize that harmony alone IS, and that He is the synthesis of the opposites, which transcends both... a transcendental Being that the mind and intellect cannot touch, nor ignore because He is in the depth of our being.

Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita points to it in these words: "Whatever you are searching for, you are searching for Me, God." You cannot get away from that. You may love your family, teach your nation, but in effect you are only trying to reach out beyond the little self, to the perfect love. Even if we think that we have mastered the scriptures, deep down within us there is still an urge to reach out, to experience this. Yet, most often we do not recognize it in the proper light. The Divine is in us, all the time stirring this Divine restlessness. To recognize it as Divine requires a certain amount of wisdom and insight. Why is it that otherwise nothing satisfies us? Because God who is transcendental, whom the mind, the intellect cannot comprehend, is deep within us, the very Self. Until that realization is reached through the love of God, this restlessness is not going to stop. So love your God with all your heart and all your soul. He is transcendent; He is immanent.

He is never a God to whom you can dictate terms. He is not dependent upon what men do.

The God of the Exodus - always before Israel, calling them away from themselves towards Himself.

Again imaged in the New Testament in the person of Jesus. God as love - but calling us out of ourselves to follow the Son.

Father Terence comments:

The Judaic-Christian understanding of God as transcendent and immanent: In Exodus III, 13-15, God reveals his name to Moses -

Yahweh-from the Hebrew verb "to be:" I am Who I am, I will be Who I will be.

Yahweh is an ever present and active God among his people - the one who SAVES - Exodus story. But it is a name that cannot be grasped and dominated by men or the affairs of men. He is INDEPENDENT and TRANSCEN- DENT.

Q. Where to find God?

Swami: All religions declare that God is everywhere: yet, we do not experience His omnipresence! There seems to be a veil between Him and me. If God is omnipresent, what stands between Him and me? Surely, it is the "me." It is the "me" that has given rise to all these concepts, symbols, rites and religious organizations. I must get closer to the reality of God, not by dividing the one into good and evil, divine and undivine, but by lifting the cover (which is the "me"). This does not involve division or judgment, but only the realization of oneness through love.

Q. What is Truth?

Swami: "There is no religion higher than Truth" is the doctrine of the Theosophical Society. The Upanishads declare, "Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood." Mahatma Gandhi said, "God is Truth." And Jesus Christ was asked, "What is truth?" (John XVIII, 38) and he did not answer, for a very good reason. Truth is not definable and it is not a demonstrable object, nor something which can be given by one to another.

Throughout history we have consistently and persistently committed this error: we have endeavored to define Truth, and to hand Truth down to others, and thus blasphemed against it. The truth that is thus packaged and handed down is not truth, but it is a thought about Truth. And the Truth that is thus received by the other person is not the Truth, but a concept. The conception is always of the same substance as the conceiver: the conceiver covers the conception with

error, and limits it, thus making it non-truth. Conception can only be of the description and the description is a thought, not the Truth.

Hence, though the realization of the Truth should make us free (ref. John VIII, 31-32), the various and different conceptions of what is described as the same Truth have led to the very opposite of freedom. It is clear that there is just no alternative to the direct realization of Truth, and this demands that each one of us should discover it for himself.

If we pursue the inquiry and inquire into the nature of sorrow, we shall perhaps discover that sorrow is born of thought, that sorrow is thought. When thought is absent (for example, in sleep, under anaesthesia, and in shock) sorrow is absent too. Hence, we realize that there is a way to end this sorrow, and that there is a way to rise above thought, while yet living an active life in the world.

This, however, does not mean that we can eliminate thought from life altogether: a realistic observation of life enables us to see clearly that this is impossible. Thought has its own role to play in our life. But we should find a way to ensure that thought does not bring about sorrow. For it is thought that brings about sorrow and then it is thought again that experiences it!

When we see this clearly, sorrow disappears! Thought continues to illumine the world to us: but, in the words of the Upanishads, "even as the sun that illumines the world is unaffected by what goes on in it, this inner light that illumines our life does not produce sorrow." There is freedom!

Religion

Q. Is Yoga a religion?

Swami: Yoga is not a religion, but just "religion," in its own original connotation: "that which binds again." And this word "yoga" has its first cousin in the word "yoke."

Yoga has been made to sound mystifying: yet it has nothing whatsoever to do with magic or mystery, psychic powers or astral travel, occultism or other-worldliness. It is closer to life than most people imagine. It is the art of living in tune with God, yoked to God.

That is what we mean by "religion," though this word has lost its original meaning in the welter if "isms" that the beast-in-man has created. When I once stated that "We urgently need a religious revival in the world," someone questioned me, "Which religion?" Not Hinduism, not Islam, not Judaism, and not Christianity: but, if I may use the word, "Religionism." Religion means binding the human soul with God. Once again: not "my" God or "your" God, but God.

Q. Is religion in opposition to science or is there a common meeting ground between the two?

Swami: Somehow we have arrived at the conclusion in the world today that either science or religion is at the base of all our troubles. Men of religion feel that science is leading man away from God, from the true values, and by aiding in the creation of weapons of destruction has brought man close to self-extinction. Scientists take no notice of this, for in their own mind they are pursuing the noble quest of truth in their way. On the other hand, inellectuals and rationalists blame religion for fomenting dissentions and divisions among humanity, though true men of religion assert that no religion sanctions hatred and violence and that religious wars are a misnomer.

Religion can be blamed for irreligious consequences and science can be proved to be unscientific. But how does this solve the problem that

faces us - the Men in the Street? What are our guiding principles - those of the common men and women who constitute the majority of mankind? The first and foremost is the instinct of self-preservation. Man wants to be healthy and happy. If science promises this, he will accept it. And if religion (e.g. temples, worship, pilgrimage) promises this, he will resort to it. When he is healthy and happy, the next thing he seeks is an avenue for self-expression to express or to manifest his nature. Up to this point he is not essentially different from what we consider to be the "lower" orders of creation.

Where man can distinguish himself is the third principle self-control. Self-control implies and presupposes self- awareness. Only one in a million perhaps is interested in this. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita reveals that only a rare seeker discovers the Truth (VIII.3). The Katha Upanishad echoes this divine utterance: "The senses and the mind have been created with an outgoing tendency and therefore man always looks outside, but a rare hero turns his gaze within himself, aspiring for Self-realization.

Even if we can bring about world brotherhood tomorrow morning, what then? We shall soon discover that one brother kills another. This has happened throughout the history of the human race. And this will go on till that rare hero turns his gaze within and realizes that the real source of mischief is within. The roots of evil are within, the roots of hatred are within, the roots of unworthy desires are within. These have to be pulled out there. If these roots are not there, the evils they grow into will not appear in your conduct. Whatever be the provocation, you will not hate or kill. You do not bite a dog because the dog bit you and thus provoked you to retaliate! Self-control will become natural when we cultivate this self-awareness, when we turn our gaze within. This is the first principle of Yoga.

I do not say that all people must practice Yoga and that Yoga will bring about world peace and brotherhood. This will only start another cult. But those men who live a life of self-control, who have self-awareness,

who have eradicated the very roots of evil within themselves, are yogis. Only they will live a life of peace and brotherhood. The vast majority of other people will naturally look up either to religion or to science to make their lives a little healthier and happier than they are at present.

Q. Religions are different throughout the world. But are the people who practice these religions so different?

Swami: As you travel from what is called one country to another, you meet different people who look different, who behave differently, who speak different languages, who dress differently, but underneath all this you discover that they have a common denominator: they are all human beings.

You wonder why you did not discover this earlier! You were taken in by superficial differences: many of them owe their origin to accidents of history, climatic conditions, and in some cases social upheavals. Pain and pleasure, hunger and thirst, disease and old age, birth and death are common to all.

You look at your own life, your culture, your upbringing, your education, the books and the newspapers that you read, the propaganda and the preaching you listen to - you hardly find any serious mention of this commonness of humanity. Even in religious teaching this commonness of humanity is treated with a flippant superficiality which makes no impression on anyone. Yet, religion is not religion if it does not enable us to see that as human beings we are one.

If you are serious, you discover that somehow something deep within each one of us has resisted this religious spirit and rejected it. The spirit of religion has failed to touch and to transform it. On the other hand, this divisive factor that is deep within each one of us has even polluted the spirit of religion.

People loosely talk of religious conflicts. But, violence is incompatible with the universal religious tenet that God is omnipresent. We have not understood what religion means: we only profess to be religious and we pay lip-service to religious tenets.

Yet the seeking mind is exactly the same all over the world, and the obstructions to the seeking mind are also exactly the same all over the world. There are traditionalists, fundamentalists, die-hards and dogmatists everywhere in the world. You find them in as many numbers among the swamis and yogis as you find them in other cults. So the obstructions are the same, or the "devil's dance" is the same everywhere. The awakening of intelligence is also the same everywhere, and the people who experience this inner stirring of consciousness are, luckily for the world and unluckily for us, very few. The problems that they experience in relation to the majority of die-hards are also exactly the same.

The Spirit is free and that Spirit is somehow encased in a body, in a spiritual, psychological and emotional structure. Then, as you the seeker struggle with your own trap, you suddenly begin to understand without any criticism, without the least judgment or condemnation whatsoever, the problems that confront others, who may be totally trapped and who may love the trap of tradition, of dogma. You don't feel like condemning them because you realize that you are also struggling with your own physical, psychological and emotional needs. Even though your Spirit is free, you still got trapped in all this. It is then you realize the extraordinary "play" of the Divine. (It's the only word that can perhaps explain that even what may be an awakened intelligence still experiences these limitations.) Therefore the wandering swami or yogi, the wandering person with an awakened intelligence, is in sympathy with the entire universe and has not a harsh word for any living being on earth. He is in love with the earth.

Q. What is the importance of churches and temples? Swami: We do not have to build temples for the Lord- he has wisely ensured that we

shall never be without one, by providing the head of each one of us with two "temples," as the sides of our face are called. (Ref. 1 Cor. III, 16). God is within this temple: god is the innermost consciousness. That is what the ancient sages and seers have said. Too much preoccupied as man was with the satisfaction of his animal instincts, he ignored this and erected temples of stone. When he was exhorted to sacrifice those animal instincts, he substituted the poor dumb animals which he freely "sacrificed" and "making a god of his palate" offered them to appease his own appetite. When, still later, other great redeemers appeared on the world scene (like Lord Krishna, Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus), he quickly deified them instead of listening to their counsel and restoring purity to religion.

Hinduism and Judaism had no founders: perhaps it would be wise to say that they are not religions in the accepted ("theological") sense of the term. Krishna did not establish a religion. Buddha was not the author of Buddhism. Nor did Jesus found Christianity. They all "descended" into the world of man in order to remind him that God or Truth or reality was within his own temple, that religion did not consist of rituals but of righteous living, and that the animal to be sacrificed was not outside him but within his own heart. But our churches, temples and mosques and the idols of religious ideologies that we have erected in our own intellect have imprisoned us and we are unable to see beyond the walls thus erected around us.

The God within our own temple is glorious. He is Peace. He is Bliss. He is eternal, immortal, the Life of our life.

Q. Is apathy the same as the rejection of established religion, or of certain beliefs and forms of worship, or of traditional patterns and authority?

Swami: The established religions themselves drastically change their doctrines, beliefs and rites. Such "renewal" goes on all the time in all religions.

On the other hand, such a rejection itself may be the very opposite of apathy! Docile acceptance of dogma may well be the surest indication of apathy, a comfortable and dull state in which there is no enthusiasm at all. Such apathy is found in both the affluent and the deprived communities in the world. In the former it is born of a faith in the material acquisition and political or military power (though this is often rationalized by the clever intellect as the divine will, the divine plan or divine grace); and in the latter it is born of sheer hopelessness (which again is somehow masked by the laws of karma or the virtues of poverty and suffering). Most of the established religions of the world subscribe to one or the other of these theories, and wittingly or unwittingly promote apathy.

Yet, their own founders (if one may call them so) were not so apathetic. They questioned the authority of the self-appointed authorities. It is the establishment that ploarizes the community into the authority and the subject: to the authority obedience seems to be easy, desirable and good, whereas to the subject such obedience is hard, painful and unjust. This polarity sets one up against the other, and there is a power struggle which seems to be inevitable to all establishments.

Rebellion against authority or establishment often produces short-term enthusiasm, but in the long run the rebel becomes the established authority, and once again the community sinks into apathy.

Yet, there is no apathy in life! Apathy exists only in the sphere of the mind, of thought, of concepts and beliefs. Security, peace, happiness and order are life's constants. However, the human mind believes that all these can be easily had by conjuring up palliatives and half-truths which, if repeated often enough, will banish all the problems that the mind creates in life. Thus were the various beliefs born, thus did the religious, political and economic doctrines come into being. These,

again, harden into establishments very soon, and the whole problem starts all over again - the polarization, the authority and the apathy.

Life does not brook this; and hence, periodically there is a crisis in the life of human beings individually, and humanity as a whole. This crisis is really the crisis of conscience. This crisis is a powerful challenge to authority: awakening apathy has no choice but to challenge authority, in order to flare up into enthusiasm.

This whole vicious circle will come to an end only when we look at life and become aware of its truth. We see how life on earth comes into being, and undergoes the various changes known as youth and adulthood, and even old age and death: we see how every transgression is accompanied and followed by a balancing reaction. The wise man does not wish against any of these. When this truth concerning the totality of life is seen, at that very instant we are freed from the resistance to the natural "law and order" of life; we transcend the pains of these changes and experience an inward peace and joy which is beyond the division known as time. We realize that security and freedom do not lie in defying life but in thoroughly understanding it (standing under, not overcoming). Life organized is subject to change: but the spirit of life is itself unchanging. Life organized is the body, the spirit of life is intelligence.

The intelligence in the body is able to nourish the body utilizing the elements that are freely available in the world - sunlight, water, air and food. It does not endeavor to abolish diversity. It takes the same elements, the same food, and is somehow able to sustain the diverse creatures. The mind, the thinking faculty, treats this diversity as "difference" and then tries to find the unity in that diversity. Concepts of difference, diversity, unity, etc. exist in the mind, not in life.

Is it not possible for the mind to drop these irksome and destructive concepts? Then, the intelligence will similarly be able to nourish the mind and the spirit of man with healthy spiritual food from every

available source whether it be labelled Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or non- denominational! Thus nourished everyone will grow in spirit, without creating an establishment and all the mischief it gives rise to, without becoming an authority on the subject, and thus without apathy, as intensely alive as life itself ever is.

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1. Interview with Swami Venkatesananda on PRIORITIES, Sept. 25, 1982. Presented by Tony Howes of ABC radio 6WN, Australia.

2. Father Terence aptly quotes from Isaiah (I: 11, 13 & 15-17): "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? I have had enough of burnt offerings... Bring no more vain offerings... Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

God's Will-Free Will

Q. Do we have free will or is everything already pre-ordained by God's will?

Swami: In the bible, the first "I," the first ego, is represented by Adam. Adam thought he had free will and sought a way to express it. Now, watch carefully! As if to sanction his free will, God tells him he may do what he likes, but he may not eat from one particular tree. How does Adam exercise his free will? By disobeying. The exercise of free will by the ego is contrary to Divine will, although on the surface this does not seem to be so.

Now we come to the life of Jesus. His teaching is very clear. He says not even a sparrow will fall to the ground unless it is the will of God. Nothing can happen without God's will! We see that when the ego exercises its will, it is always guided by pleasure, profit and prestige. Thus we ask to be saved from pain and ask for that which is pleasurable. But really and truly it is God's will alone that is done.

Let us come back to the story of Adam. God gave him free will and, in an indirect way, Adam exercised God's will by denying God's will! God created Adam in his own image and then indicated that he was free to choose what he wished to do. By disobeying God's words he demonstrated that he had free will - yet this apparent disobedience was still God's will! Nothing ever happens contrary to God's will, but as long as the "I" is there, as long as the ignorance is there, it has free will.

Q. Does the operation of God's will depend on our prayer, assertion or affirmation?

Swami: No. Yet, this prayer is very fruitful, for the simple reason that it puts us in touch with Him, it fulls our mind with His thought, and it wipes out selfishness, "Self-willing" and egotism. Nothing ever takes place in this universe which is not His Will. The impulsive villain and

the restraining hand are both powered by Him. From the human standpoint, action and reaction both spring from His Will and manifest His Will. To realize this is to be liberated at once from all idea of sin or evil: but this concept should not be used as an "escape-valve" to slip through.

If the realization of the Omnipotence of the Omnipresent and Omniscient Divine Will (other than which nothing else is), liberates us from the sense of sin and evil, it should also liberate us from pain and grief: the man who inflicts it on us does nothing but His Will. Fulfillment of prayer is a byproduct of this God-contact, granted only to one who does not seriously wish for it, and is not making such fulfillment his goal.

The true yogi who lives by this bhavana (attitude), truly feeling that His Will runs this world-show, will be constantly conscious of God and the actions that proceed through him will be automatic to the ego, but conscious and purposeful to the Divinity in him. That is: the ego does not act, but the Divine uses even the ego as His instrument.

The foolish man often misappropriates all the credit for good work to himself, and throws the burden of evil doing upon God - "It was His Will." On the contrary, the godly man would give credit for all the good that proceeded from him, to God; and if a blameworthy action of his is brought to his notice, he would hesitate to say, "His Will," even if it was beyond his control. He would humbly take the blame upon himself, feeling that God cannot err. Thus, he cuts at once at the root of the ego and therefore evil. The soul-elevating music belongs to Him and the false note to the defect in the reed!

Q. How am I to know my duty or His Will, so that I may do it in the spirit of karma yoga?

Swami: Often this eagerness to know His Will is the worst obstruction to it. The ego wants to assert, "I do His Will:" and it therefore does not do His Will. The formula, "Thy Will be done" is only help in this sadhana

(spiritual practice) coupled with humility and meditation. By prayer and meditation we should be in tune with Him. Any selfish motive or desire should be ruthlessly hewn down with the axe of relaxed vigilance. The duty will be clear and the march along the path of His Will will be effortless.

Father Terence comments: Discernment of God's will is difficult and complex. Indication that we are doing as He wills is found in the fruits of the Spirit, e.g. love, joy, peace, etc.- ref. Gal. V, 22-23; Ephes. IV, 15-16.

Q. "Thy Will be done." How does one understand what "Thy Will" is?

Swami: Here Yoga comes to help as a technique. First of all, we are cautioned that the earlier teachings are important. In Yoga they are called yama and niyama. The names do not matter. If you have studied the Sermon on the Mount carefully, word by word, and if you have been able to assimilate that teaching to the best of your ability, you do not need anything else: that is yama, niyama.

So you study the Sermon on the Mount and assimilate the teachings to the best of your ability. You go on studying, memorizing these teachings until your heart becomes similar to these teachings, so that your heart is not your heart any more - it is the Sermon on the Mount. (And when the doctor places the stethoscope to the heart he hears the Sermon on the Mount!) Assimilate it, then what the yogi calls the disciplines of yoga like yama and niyama become effortless, not automatic - natural, just as the heart beats are natural. Then virtue and righteousness become natural, there is no effort.

This aspect of Yoga is misunderstood even by yogis who think that all virtues described in yoga texts are commandments: Thou shalt and thou shalt not. They look like commandments but they are only descriptive of a certain state of the yogi. When the teaching has been assimilated, this is the key to the yogi's heart. Study these teachings. That is the first step in Yoga and Christianity. Then gradually ascend

the Mount, having laid the foundation of ethics and righteousness. Jesus is already standing there. He will tell you what His will is!

Prayer

Q. What is prayer? What is communion?

Swami: Prayer is the key to what yogis call meditation or what Christians might call communion. There is absolutely no difference between the true meaning of meditation and communion. Communion is not just a ceremony. Some say that it is very important for meditation to buy the right type of cushion, and special clothing; and you should sit with your back straight and so on. All this is ritual, ceremony. It may be very important and of great help, but that is not meditation. I am not saying that these things are unnecessary. All these may be essential aids, but essential aids only, not meditation. Meditation is communion. Communion is meditation.

What is communion? "Comme-une," communion is "like one." Similarly, what is atonement? You were trying to reach out to the truth, to the Divine and you slipped. Which means you have fallen away from that. Now you must reach atonement. At-one. We have this communion- atonement, which are the same: to regain that oneness. This is Yoga. So, whenever you slip while ascending to the Kingdom of Heaven, pray.

I do not know if you are aware of how to pray. Most of us do not pray to God. Most of us prey upon God and upon men. I think that is the only reason why God keeps Himself so scarce! Can you imagine God coming here now? You know what His fate would be? All of us would jump upon Him and tear Him to pieces crying: "Give me this, give me that. First me!" Communion is just the opposite. Communion is offering ourselves totally to Him so that we become one with Him. So prayer is something different from what we have made of it. It is an expression of one's devotion to God; and since it is an expression, it involves concepts and words: verbal and non-verbal expressions.

Father Terence comments: The focus for prayer is certainly communion Christ-consciousness awareness of the Holy within and

without. Highlight of Christian prayer celebration of the Eurcharist where there is a meeting of God in Word (Scripture) and sign (Bread and Wine). The sign is incomplete without eating (communion). We seek to become what we eat, viz. Christ. Hence the name given: "Holy Communion."

Communion is also sought in other ways- meditation, contemplation, other prayer forms, other sacramental signs, e.g. Sacrament of reconciliation (i.e. seeking at-one-ment with God).

Q. In what way do Hindu prayers differ from Christian prayers?

Swami: Prayers are prayers, addressed by Man to God! Why do we label them Hindu prayers, Muslim prayers or Christian prayers? The language is different, but the content, the message, is the same.

We use even these words Hindu, Muslim, Christian indiscriminately. Out of these our mind fashions images, masks. These masks then collide, bringing in their train disharmony, conflict and violence.

Someone defined Hindu as one who has banished himsa (violence) from his heart. A Muslim is one who has surrendered himself to God. A Christian is one who loves God and loves fellowman. Three words whose meaning is identical, if you are sincerely looking for the meaning and not for an excuse to distinguish yourself from the other and to distinguish yourself above the other!

Such indiscriminate discrimination is a sign of ignorance. But, what is ignorance? It is not an object or an entity which is supposed to obstruct our vision. Ignorance is a type of knowledge that tells us that we are looking in the wrong direction or through wrong glasses which pervert our vision. (Hence, it is denoted by the negatively-worded a-vidya or a-jnana in Sanskrit.) We are looking: but we are not looking in the right direction and in the right perspective. We do not bother to "meet" a brother-seeker professing another faith; and even if we do meet him, we look at him and his faith through the glasses of prejudice

and indiscriminate discrimination. If we abandon this, we might still see the distinguishing characteristic of "our" faith, without even wishing to distinguish ourselves or consider ourselves as superior or inferior! Allah in Arabic (is) God in English and Isvara in Sanskrit: the words are different, the languages are different, the spelling is different: but they connote the one truth.

Father Terence comments: One aspect of true prayer is coming to awareness, i.e. the removal of the veil which distorts our vision. Ref. 2 Cor. III, 16ff.

Removal of the veil brings recognition of the unity we share: Ephes. IV, 4ff.

Q. Can the Easter story be paralleled with anything in the Hindu scriptures?

Swami: Why should we divide scriptures into Hindu scriptures and Christian scriptures? They are common: they have a common message; they are the heritage of the whole of mankind. By regarding some as "mine" and some as "other," we develop blind faith in the former and equally blind antipathy in the latter. Sanskrit is not my mother- tongue; nor is English! If I can learn them, there is no reason why the average "westerner" should think he is incompetent to read Sanskrit and understand the scriptures in their original.

Translations are always subject to corrpution, though unintentional. The two words "Durga Saptashati" can be simply translated into "700 verses concerning Durga," not to be deified, not to be feared or discarded, but to be carefully studied. Even the word "Durga" has a simple meaning: "difficult to reach or approach." Jesus Christ illustrated how difficult it is for man to seek true salvation, by demanding of the man who professed to be a faithful adherent of the Commandments, "Sell all that you have and follow me:" he did not!

The spiritual truth which is ever-present in all is revealed only by a crisis. The divinity of Jesus was revealed by the Crucifixion and the Durga Saptashati tells us that the Divine Mother revealed herself whenever evil threatened to overwhelm the good. Yet it is the evil that helps reveal the good: which is perhaps a reason why the day of Christ's Crucifixion is called Good Friday, and a reason why the demons that oppressed the devas and challenged the Divine Mother Durga are also remembered in the scripture.

The Easter story and the stories of the Durga Saptashati have much in common: the immortality of the spirit, and the availability of redemption to all are dramatically proclaimed. The words of the angels in the garden outside the tomb: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" remind us that resurrection is not of the dead but of the ever living.

Jesus spoke in parables; the Durga Saptashati is in parables, too! The first of the three stories deals with the power of sleep: and one is reminded of how the disciples of Jesus fell asleep on the night of his betrayal. You do not sleep, but sleep overpowers you. And so, you cannot wake up: when sleep leaves you you wake up. Yet, with the help of an alarm clock you can wake up and throw off sleep. Similarly, you are in the grip of spiritual ignorance. You cannot shake it off by self-effort unaided by Divine Grace; the Divine Grace is like the alarm clock.

The grace is earned by utter devotion to God in humble recognition of one's own powerlessness to conquer the great delusion. Hence, we pray, we worship. On the night of the betrayal, Jesus went into seclusion and prayed fervently. When threatened by the demons, the gods prayed to the Divine Mother Durga.

Q. Why is it that our prayers seem to go unanswered?

Swami: When you have a headache, you do not go on praying, "I want aspirin" but you go and find the remedy. You pray for wealth and work

hard to get it. You pray for relief from illness and you do not rest till you get rid of it. Yet, you pray "Lord, free me from egoism, lust, anger and hatred" or "Lord, let me behold you," but do nothing more about it. Even the prayer becomes mechanical, meaningless and insincere.

When the prayer goes unanswered, the sincere man re-examines the whole position, knowing that either the effort is not strong or it is misdirected. He wonders, "Where does the prayer arise? What is the power that makes me think, speak and pray?" Only if that source is pure, is the prayer granted.

Q. We call ourselves Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Christians. We worship God in various ways, and we read the scriptures. Yet this does not seem to have brought about the least change in us. Why is this so?

Swami: We have made images not only of Krishna, Christ, Buddha and other holy ones, but even of their teachings! Krishna's "Yoga," Jesus Christ's "Kingdom of God," Buddha's "Nirvana" are all but images in our own mind to which we pay homage, for to us they are not meaningful.

Why so? Because we have not started where they began their own life. We therefore do not see what they saw. We do not understand what Yoga, Nirvana, Salvation and Liberation truly are: we worship the words, the images.

A German Buddhist monk living in Singapore is fond of saying: "I do not want to become a Buddhist, I want to become a Buddha." In order to do this, you must look at the world afresh: Buddha did so too, though saying this does not help! When you directly become aware of the conflicts that are tearing our society apart, and of the confusions within yourself, then this awareness itself will act instantly, spontaneously and powerfully. As my Master Swami Sivananda used to say, "It transcends reason, though it does not contradict reason."

This awareness cannot be taught; and it need not be taught. Have you ever crossed a road without first looking to your right and to your left, and have you ever been threatened by a car speeding towards you, and do you remember how spontaneously and instantly you acted to save yourself? You did not have time to think, to reason, and to come to a right decision!

Look within and see. Your actions are either impulsive and motivated by "feeling" or calculated and motivated by "reason." These actions always leave you dissatisfied and confused. Hence our life remains confused and we are However, "spontaneous" action cannot be "practiced!" It has to happen. It happens when you vigilantly keep a watch over the fountain-source of action within yourself and ensure that the action does not spring from feelings and from reason. This watchfulness or awareness will act spontaneously.

Father Terence comments: Jesus' one request to his disciples was "Follow me," i.e. do as I do, live as I live.

World, Life and Relationship

Q. How does the yogi tackle the battle of life?

Swami: Disease, doubt and restlessness of the mind are all obstacles and they manifest in us because of lack of one-pointed devotion. Remember the Biblical command- ment: "Love the Lord with all thy heart, all thy mind, and all thy might and being." We must apply that wholeheartedness not only to devotion to God but to everything we do. That is Yoga.

The whole life is Yoga when real integration exists in us and we are able to apply a totally integrated personality to whatever we do. The entire message of Yoga is contained in the single commandment to love with one's entire being. Patanjali echoes this in his Sutras when he says, "In order to remove the obstacles on the path of yoga, an integral approach is necessary." (II.29) Whatever I may practice, if I am not sincere in the sense of whole-souled dedication and an integrated approach, Yoga is not possible.

Yoga is integration, wholeness. Sincerity here means that I do not only accept it intellectually, but also emotionally, with my whole being. If there is insincerity, then only part of me accepts. It is the emotional assent that provides the energy for what we do. When the emotions are stirred, they provide an almost constantly increasing supply of energy. When it comes to intellectual comprehension and dry discussion, the head becomes heavy, the mind gets dull. There is no energy. It is the emotion that is needed to supply the energy.

Therefore, if there is not a wedding of intellect and emotion, then there is no energy available for the yoga that you and I practice.

Q. What is the most important problem the spiritual aspirant should seek to resolve?

Swami: Our immediate problem is not answering such academic questions as "Does God exist?" or "Who created the universe?" or

"How many cells are there in an average brain?" The most pressing and urgent question is of human relationship.

The lives of Krishna, Buddha and Jesus Christ illustrate this truth abundantly: whereas the natural elements (the wind, the fire and the waves of the ocean) implicitly obeyed them, man did not! This rebellious spirit in man will not easily be subdued, not by others' dictation, nor by mechanical methods adopted by oneself, but by self-knowledge alone.

Yoga is such self-knowledge. Even the yoga postures are meant to aid the seekeer to attain knowledge of the physical body. From there on, he has to seek to know himself - the prana, the mind and its vagaries, and ultimately his very self. It is only when it is discovered that the "self" itself is a thought, albeit the first thought, that selfishness or egolatry will cease to be. That is the end of our problems, and that is the aim and the culmination of Yoga.

Q. How does one reconcile the apparent diversity of the world with the unity or oneness described in the scriptures?

Swami: There is a view which is comparable to the dream state, where we realize that we are all one, created by God, living in God, as part of God, non-different from God, and yet playing the role of diversity, which is analagous to the dream state. It is not truly real, the drama is taking place in someone else's mind. That, I believe, is the esoteric interpretation of the beginning of the Bible "In the beginning..." The Jewish Qabbalists interpret this in two ways. Instead of the "beginning," they substitute the word "head" or "mind." The Hebrew word given means "head" or "mind." So if you substitute that word "beginning" with the word "mind," the whole meaning changes. Where did God create the world? In His own mind. That is, He did not create something and throw it outside, as a mother giving birth to a baby, but all this is still taking place in God's own mind!

The Qabbalists also have a beautiful vision of the Truth, where they say that old Adam is still dreaming in the Garden of Eden. The story says he fell asleep and that God pulled out a rib and made a wife for him. That is taken as literally true, that Adam is still asleep and has not yet awakened; all this diversity, all this creation, etc. is still happening in Adam's dream.

The third vision of the Reality is:

uttamah purusas tv anyah paramatme 'ty udahrtah

yo lokatrayam avisya bibharty avyaya isvarah

(Bhagavad Gita XV.17)

"But distinct is the supreme Purusa called the highest Self, the indestructible Lord, Who, pervading the three worlds, sustains them." Where no diversity is seen at all, but oneness alone is seen to be the Reality, in exactly the same way as you can visualize this body as composed of billions of cells, or you can see the one body, forgetting the diversity implied in it. These are the three views given of God, the world and the Self.

Father Terence comments: Body image used by Paul - 1 Cor. XII, 12-31. Diversity, but one spirit.

Q. How can one best relate with the different people one comes into contact with?

Swami: One is truly good only when one's whole being is good. The Bible contains a beautiful saying by Jesus, "When your eye is single then your whole being is full of light." This means that the whole being is integrated, harmonized in Yoga - and then only does goodness become spontaneous, natural. How does such a person behave in the world? Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras gives us a very beautiful description: "Be friendly towards the happy ones, sympathize with the unhappy ones, rejoice with the holy ones and be indifferent towards

the evil ones." (I.33) If you adopt this attitude in all your human relationships, you will enjoy peace of mind.

Q. The scriptures tell us that the world is a product of our own ignorance. How do you explain this?

Swami: The first thought is "I." Then this first thought, this "I" creates thoughts of the world. In the Bible we have the beautiful story of Adam and Eve - the first romance. If you watch carefully you will see this same truth in that story. God created Adam, and Eve was projected out of Adam. The Bible says that God actually created Adam; He did not take a separate piece of matter and create Eve out of that. The story goes on to say that, having created Adam, God made Adam project Eve out of himself. Before Eve could be created however, Adam was put to sleep! This is symbolic and beautiful. God is omnipresent and even Adam is part of this omnipresence. First of all comes sleep, ignorance, and in that state of ignorance Adam (ego) is born. His ego then projects the world.

Father Terence comments: Ignorance is sin, i.e. our inability to see reality as it is, to see as God sees. Jesus' call to repentance was a call to knowledge of the Truth - to be able to "see" again (ref. stories Mark X, 46-52 and VIII, 22-26).

Conversion and repentance are not only sorrow for sin, but a reorientation of one's life based on the new perspective of reality. It is the process we engage in to shake off ignorance.

Q. How do we inspire people to discipline themselves?

Swami: The late Cardinal gilroy answered this question beautifully during a conversation we had in February, 1972: "By placing one's own life as an example," he said, but without claiming to be perfect, for "without God's help it is not possible for man to achieve the ideal of goodness he sets for himself." This was the Cardinal's sheet-anchor, as it were. There should be a genuine aspiration to be good and to do

good; and there should be an equally genuine understanding that this is possible only by the grace and with the help of God.

On the other hand, there is a tremendous pull towards materialism, towards power and money, which are the two most corrputing influences in the world and in the life of human beings. "Human nature is the same all over the world," said the Cardinal. Everywhere people seek short- term advantage, without realizing that such an attitude only promotes conflict in society which is in relation to one's fellowmen. With bliss radiating from his face, the Cardinal said, "I have retired. I have no power. I am poor, I have no money." And yet, there was that unearthly glow in his eyes, a wonderful spirit that had the power to transform the lives of those who were fortunate enough to seek his company.

"You find good people all over the world, among the poor, among the simple folk," he said, "and even the wicked man endeavors to rationalize his actions and his attitude, so that even he does not wish to be known as a wicked man, but as a good man. Therefore, it is evident that there is a natural law in the universe that inclines man towards goodness. We should appeal to that in our own approach. And again and again we should emphasize that man cannot reach this goodness without the grace and the help of God." It is that genuine humility that protects man from the traps of power and wealth, and sustains his vigilance.

Q. "I and the Father are One." (John X, 30) What was Jesus' consciousness that made Him make this declaration? How can we share this consciousness?

Swami: Communion with God. Jesus Christ affirms: "I have become One with God." Is it possible for you to retain this ego-centered personality and at the same time aspire to that? This is the greatest foolishness that we commit. Perhaps that is why Jesus let fall these words, "Father, let this cup pass" (ref. Mark XIV, 36). To remind us that

even in His case, such a thought could arise. In our case it could arise a million times over, but the sincere spiritual aspirant keeps on and on until all traces of desire, craving and will other than the Divine Will disintegrate. Then we really and truly can feel the truth of what Jesus said: "What I have done you can also do."

What we need is profound understanding, direct understanding, not cosmetic or superficial knowledge. Someone described the mind in meditation, the mind in direct contact with the Divine, (which is the mind in communion) and gave a beautiful example. Pick up a fairly large pebble, take it to the swimming pool where the water is calm, drop it in and note how beautifully, how intelligently that pebble draws a straight line through the water. Without deviation it goes straight down, without stopping, without being distracted or side-tracked. That is the mind in meditation. That is the mind in Holy Communion.

Can we discipline our mind in this way? Yoga is nothing but a system of such discipline. Discipline not in the sense of brutal control: "I will not do this, I will do this." The moment one applies will to this practice one agitates "the swimming pool," then the "stone" also is distracted, agitated, side-tracked. The will is the play of the ego. I am not saying that the will is not necessary for all the other things, but in spiritual practice one must not use the will at all for the spirit does not employ will. The spirit employs insight. The spirit is insight.

To kindle the spirit of insight, study the teachings of Christ, study the teachings of Buddha, Krishna and others. They are exactly the same and all ennobling, uplifting. But assimilate these teachings so that whatever disciplines have been described there become natural to you. We cannot calculate love, humility, without becoming hypocritical. All these virtues should become natural to us and the heart should naturally seek the Divine, without being prompted, without being goaded, without any motivation, without even treating the Divine as a goal. Then there is Communion. This is Yoga.

Q. How do I know who is holy, how do I know what good company is?

Swami: Am I the one to decide if someone is holy or not? Should I undertake to discriminate between what is good or what is evil? Such discrimination involves judgment: and such judgment itself is evil! Even the word "discrimination" may not mean "divide and decide." Viveka or "discrimination between the real and the unreal" may really signify something completely different from what we have assumed it to be.

All religious authorities declare that God is omnipresent. Surely, that is what the original mystics saw. If that is the truth, to draw close to that is satsanga (company of the truth). A study of the history of religion shows us that it has not been possible to preserve and to perpetuate the purity of the mystics' vision. The human intelligence loves to discover; and hence it first covers the reality with ideas, concepts, symbols, rites and religious organizations.

Unfortunately, this seems to be inevitable and invariable. But, fortunately, the truth is ever there, only to be discovered. To discover, one must have the moral courage to see the cover, not to avert one's gaze from it. To discover, again, one must have the courage to lift the cover and not be lost in admiration of it, however enchanting it may be. Such a discovery is satsanga. We draw close to the truth, without either rejecting the encrustation of the false or getting stuck in it! This is discrimination.

Father Terence comments: We are called to refrain from judging - we do not see as God sees - and do not have the ability to look into one another's hearts. Ref. Romans XIV, 2-19; 1 Cor. IV, 1-5, (don't even judge yourself!); Matt. VII, 1-5.

Q. What does charity really mean?

Swami: Love of simple life reveals that many of our so-called necessities are not really such, and love of charity unveils the endless

vista of happiness that can be ours if the objects we call "ours" cease to be so. We do not do charity because we have no faith in God and feel that our happiness depends on the objects we "possess" and so cling to them. Vulture, one of the twenty-four gurus of Lord Dattatreya (ref. Srimad Bhagavatam, The Book of God, Nov. 22 by Swami Venkatesananda), taught him that so long as one clung to earthly objects of enjoyment, one was surrounded by the enemies of one's happiness who wanted to snatch those objects from him, and that true happiness consisted in renouncing them.

What one possesses has got to go: letting the possessions go voluntarily, through charity, is the magic wand that converts pain into pleasure, the womb of misery into the fountain of happiness. Hence all saints, sages and prophets, and all the major religions of the world extol and insist upon charity.

The Taittiriya Upanishad commands: "Gift should be given with faith; it should be given in plenty, with modesty, with reverence, with sympathy." The Bhagavad Gita classes that as the best charity which is given to those from whom we do not expect any help in return (XVII.20). This doctrine is expressed by our Master Swami Sivananda, in the words "spontaneous overwhelming generosity."

Lord Jesus was unequivocal in his glorification of charity: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (Matt. XXV, 34-6) Thus does he actually enumerate the kind acts of charity. And he explains that "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me." (Matt. XXV, 40)

Father Terence comments: Charity is another word for LOVE - in Christian sense of agape, i.e. total dedication and devotion to the

welfare of the other, regardless of sacrifice and personal cost. It embraces the sharing of possessions (almsgiving). This was an aspect of the early church (ACTS IV, 32-35).

Those who begrudge the generosity deprive themselves: ref. James V, 1-6; 2 Cor. IX, 6-10.

Q. What is the value and purpose of self-punishment or penance?

Swami: Self-punishment implies the resolve never to commit the prohibited action. We have always tried to escape the consequences of our actions. The power of prayer invoked is believed to remove the sinful tendency, the root of evil. Though we believe that God forgives our sins, especially when prayed to with sincerity and faith, we recognize that if this forgiveness is procured easily, faith might be mistaken for self-deception. Moreover, the mind will not forget the evil deed and may again be tempted to repeat it.

To prove our faith to ourselves, to act as a powerful deterrent which would prevent the senses and the mind from committing the evil deed again, and as an immediate and voluntary attempt at working out the "karma," we punish ourselves. Prayer and this self-punishment together wipe out the effects of the sinful conduct -the most important of which is the impression left by the act on the mind, which eventually craves for repetition, leading us to perdition. All forms of self-punishment are effective only if the repetition is prevented: as emphasized by the command of Lord Jesus, "Go ye and sin no more." The entire process of confession and atonement releases the tension created by the sense of guilt. God's Grace is earned by charity and prayer.

Father Terence comments: Penance is an expression of a conscious desire to change one's life. Association with "metanoia" (Greek) conversion "a turning around." Penitence is more than outward acts - more an inward change of heart: ref. Jer. IV, 4; Ezek. XXXVI, 26.

Q. What (in your view) is the symbolism of the manna God sent to the Israelites in the desert?

Swami: The Jews were sustained by manna during their exodus from Egypt. That "manna" was derived from the Hebrew man hu meaning "What is it?"

Perhaps man hu (manna) refers to the spiritual quest (Who am I? What is this world? Who is God?) Exodus XVI tells us the story: The people of Israel saw "it" and did not know what it was and in response to their query Moses told them, "That is the bread that God gave you." The spirit of inquiry or the spiritual quest itself is the manna. Inquiry into the self is the key to immortality or Self-realization.

This manna had to be immediately "eaten" as otherwise "it bred worms and became foul" (Exod. XVI, 20). This could well mean: Do not let this quest become an intellectual exercise, but let it be quickly assimilated so that it becomes the living truth. To do so we should dare to free ourselves from worldliness and venture into the vast unchartered and pathless "desert" or spiritual realm. May God lead us there!

Father Terence comments: Deut. VIII, 3-comments on this event - man lives authentically only from God's word and law, this manna being the Word of God.

Wisdom XVI, 20-29 - takes up this spiritualized theme. Same theme taken up by Jesus:

In his temptation-Matt. IV, 1-4: "man does not live by bread alone."

Then he proclaims himself, not only as the new Moses who gave the manna, but the new manna itself, in so far as he was the Word of God: see John VI, 26-58.

Q. Did Jesus Christ teach love?

Swami: I don't know if he was teaching love. He was love obviously, and when you are love, what you teach is love all the time. Can you do anything else? He was considered a teacher, there was no doubt about that. But you know the famous parable about the sower: the seeds that fell on the rocks perished. You may be the best teacher in the world, but if the seeds fall on rocks they will get roasted. Nothing happens to them. Look at the world. This is the world where Jesus walked, where Buddha taught, Socrates taught, Krishna taught and look at it now. When you go round the very places where all these great people are supposed to have walked and taught what do you see?

Q. But how do you teach love, or is it necessary to teach love?

Swami: No, it's the other way round. If you are love, whatever you say is love and if a student comes to you, what you teach him is nothing but love. But unless he is receptive he may turn round and hit you. He may turn round and say, "Don't talk rubbish." So unless the other person is receptive, your teaching is of no value. Temporarily you may have won your point. If you apply the theory of probability to what I am going to say, what would be your answer? In the Bible, people brought a woman who had committed adultery to Jesus and wanted to stone her (ref. John VIII, 1-11). Jesus said, "He who has not sinned let him cast the first stone." That was a direct challenge to them. His words were full of love, but unfortunately, to them it sounded like a challenge. So they hung their heads down in shame and walked away. Is it not possible or probable that some of them eventually became his persecutors? It's probable. So although such teaching may appear to have some effect, it does not change a person until he is open. Therefore, to teach love is impossible, but to communicate love is possible, communicate in the sense that when you and I are one at heart, then it is possible non-verbally to communicate love.

Father Terence comments: Jesus teaches love in Word and Deed. Love is unconditional. In Jesus' death no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Q. Is there such a thing as a "Holy War?"

Swami: Jesus said: "Ye resist not evil" (ref. Matt. V, 39). This does not need nor does it permit another word of comment or elaboration. What seeks such interpretation is already a subtle resistance to the teaching itself! From then onwards it is easy gliding into rationalization of violence and perpetuation of conflict, which one endeavors to exclude from the instruction "What Jesus said does not apply to this situation." For instance, there are some who insist that self-defence is not covered by the teaching; then the "self" by vicious stages extends to one's family, culture, religious group, nation, etc., and of course, people say that it is one's duty to defend all these, and it is noble to die for them (which in effect means, the defender isn't prepared to die but does everything to kill). A lot of bitterness is left behind. The victor is haunted by fear; the vanquished bears a grudge. The excavation exposes the simple truth: the defenders and the culture they defended, the conquerors and the people they conquered, have all vanished, leaving just a pockmark on the earth. Even while they were alive none of them was happy, none enjoyed peace: there can be neither peace nor happiness where there is hate and consequently fear. The conqueror does not win either a war nor wealth, but he wins the enmity of the vanquished.

The aggressor is wiped out sooner than the aggrieved; he is dead even while he is physically alive. Even if the aggressor survives the oppressed, it is only by lending with, living with, and being absorbed by the survivors of the oppressed. This (peaceful co-existence) could have been effected without the aggression and its ugly consequences. The weak and the oppressed have the strength of the Lord as their succor: and the Lord is impartial. He who knows this knows what is meant by "resist not evil."

Father Terence comments: Ref. John XXIII's encyclical Pacem in Terris (1963) and writings of Vatican II.

War and violence cannot be justified. While they continue to be they will be a reflection of a spiritual immaturity. An indication that we have not yet "arrived."

Lucifer-Light and Darkness

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if you eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" [Matt. VI, 22-3]

Q. What is the devil? What exactly does the expression "Prince of Darkness" mean?

Swami: I'm not familiar with the devil and therefore I really don't know who and what that is! However, there is an interesting periodical called "The Plain Truth" and in a recent issue there is a definition given of Satan, the devil. This "thing" called Satan was originally Lucifer; Lucifer means "the light." He disobeyed God and from that moment he became known as Satan. The original word in Hebrew merely meant "adversary." If you contemplate this, probably you will begin to realize that everyone is Satan to everyone else: if I don't like you, you are Satan, if you don't like me, I am Satan.

If we take the original definition - that of disobedience to God - again I'm nearly certain that no-one is going to disqualify from being called Satan. So what is the devil? We have the same problem in the Sanskrit scriptures. First of all the words of angels and demons; angels are called sura. Sura literally means "being of Light," and asura literally means a "being of darkness." A being of light is one in whom there is clarity always, and a being of darkness, in the words of Jesus: "If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness." (Matt. VI, 23) It is a very important and delightful expression which is not easy to understand and even if it is understood, it is very uncomfortable. How can light be darkness?

There are three categories: one, a being of darkness; two, a being of light; three, a being whose light is darkness.

Jesus says: "Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required." (Luke XII, 48) If you have been given the truth, more shall be expected of you than of the person who doesn't know what it's all about: to whom the light has been given an enlightened living is expected.2

So first you have the enlightened being, one who is a being of light.3 That person lives in clarity: his motivations are clear, the hidden springs of his own actions are clear, his mind is clear, transparent, and his values, goal and behavior are clear. Then there are those who are beings of darkness - they don't know, they are confused, they don't even think or consider anything. They are what has been very beautifully described as "frogs in the well." In those of the third category there is clarity, but that clarity itself is darkness, is perverted. They say that "All those who oppose us must be destroyed." Which means "I am the holder of the monopoly of truth and everyone else who doesn't agree with me must be destroyed." If your pet dogmas are challenged you are prepared to kill, to murder. They have somehow perverted Truth and rationalized it to suit their own view. This they do not see: one small piece of the mechanism is tucked away. That's what dogma does to you.

So the clarity is there but it is kept in a non-negotiable position - it has become dogma, and from there the rest of the world is viewed. That is, you are the dogma - the light has become darkness. You cannot argue with such people, there can be absolutely no dialogue, no communication, nothing, because it is the dogma that is looking at everything else.

Q. Will Life lead them to the truth sooner or later?

Swami: I hope so, but then nobody lives that long! For fifty or sixty years you can live as a total idiot, but then the mischief is done. Some person is fanatic and brutal and kills off people because they do not fit into his dogma; then you say, "Oh yes, but he'll be alright in the next

birth and all those that were persecuted will be better off..." That doesn't suit anybody, and unfortunately the dogma is left behind. Hitler is dead and all his aides have been executed, persecuted, but the dogma is left behind. So it is like the weeds in your garden: you throw them into the rubbish dump, but they start growing there and somehow or other come back into your garden.

Q. But if the weeds are always there, is it not up to the person to choose?

Swami: That's it, that is what is called clarity, and that clarity must be uncompromisingly clear. This makes life very difficult, uncomfortable. First of all you do not take anything for granted. When something is taken for granted that becomes dogma.

A friend asked the other day, "How do I know that I live?" "I am breathing." No, sorry, if you stick a needle into your tire and puncture it, your tire will also breathe. Then you say, "I speak, I talk." Look at the tape recorder, that can also talk. So even that question has to be asked eventually, till you come to that point where you cannot argue nor even indulge in internal dialogue any more. Then you see that something is, but that something cannot be converted into dogma because it cannot be thought of. Clarity must lead you there, then you are a being of light. Then you do not have to obey "God" or something else, you are "That," you are the image of God. Finished. There is no more trouble, no more division.

When the division arises you think ("think" is another very important word) that you are the "son of the Being of Light," that everything is absolutely clear, that God's commandments are absolutely clear to you. For instance, you become the disciple of somebody and whatever he tells you you obey. But not quite, because there is an inner resistance: "Why should I do what this man says?" and that inner resistance is overcome by another thought which says, "If I obey him I will become the leader of his group, I'll become his deputy; therefore

when he goes away I will become he, or if I go somewhere else I will be his representative." Even if these motives are not there, you will at least think, "If I obey him I will inherit the kingdom of God, eternal Life." So you are not obeying him, you are only doing what you want to do.

This "clarity," this "obedience," goes on for some time, but as this obedience flows, or seemingly flows, the ego also builds up, and it builds up one little corner that is non-negotiable: "These are my Guru's teachings, I am going to obey my Guru and build a set of truths. This package of truths I have inherited." If they are your truths they will be absolutely clear to you, but they are not, they are too painful. So you don't examine them, they become something like the tumor with the fibrous tissue around, and you keep it there comfortably to use against others.

You started off by saying, "I must obey this person one hundred percent because he is divine (divine also means light). At some point, however, you tip out of this compromise and you are content with the package of luminous doctrines, but when they are packaged they have become darkness: that which was light has beome darkness. You carry a brilliant lamp in your hand, but for fear that it may be hurt by somebody, you put it in a nice tin and then carry it - "I am carrying my Guru's light." Of course you are carrying your Guru's light, but it is of no use to you or anyone it is in darkness.

So, the entire clarity has gone, your obedience has gone and you are merely trying to destroy others. At least if you are selfish enough to see a little bit of light to illumine your own path that would be good; here you are not doing anything.

You started out as a Lucifer, fond of Light, the Image of God, reflecting His glory, love and goodness. Soon all these became a little package of dogma. The dogma contains the light within itself, but with unclarity, because to you this has become a dogma. Why? Because it is not clear

to you, and therefore you are not going to spread that light, you are going to use the container of that light to hit other people.

Q. The concept of obedience is exalted in the scriptures. But what does it really mean to the devotee, the inquirer?

Swami: While obeying the Master there must be clarity within. Are you obeying or are you merely thinking that it is good to obey this man? Then you are obeying yourself, not the Master. That is, while doing whatever you consider to be the right thing in obedience to the Master, there is also a resistance in you. Are you the resistance or are you the obedience? Which one are you?

Every motive is born of resistance. There is a desire or a will to obey and then there is resistance. So you create a reason why, a motive - that is not obedience.

You start off as a Lucifer, wanting to inherit the Light, see the Light, willing to pay any price for this Light, this clarity, from the Master; therefore you are prepared to obey. Then arises this thought: "My God, this seems to be very difficult, and the end-result is not guaranteed." Since the Master doesn't guarantee that you'll become enlightened, his successor, is it worthwhile obeying him, or is there a simpler method? Then this rationalization, this motiva- tion gets better understood so the resistance, the impulse to obey and the motivation all churn around within you, and immediately the clarity is gone. The reason to obey is gone, therefore one doesn't even consider that obedience.

In the Yoga Vasistha there is a beautiful expression:

gamyadesaikanisthasya yatha panthasya padayoh

spando vigatasankalpastatha spandasva karmasu (VI.2, 1:15)

"When one has made up his mind to go to a certain place, his feet function without any mental activity; function like those feet and perform action here." You have made up your mind to go to the beach,

and the feet walk without any further problem. It may be said that your legs obey the intentions of your brain. It is not as if your right leg says, "Oh no, I would like to stay here" and the left leg says, "We really must go to the beach" - the whole thing moves without any effort whatsoever. Similarly, is there such an effortless act in strict accordance with the Master's will? (We have completely dropped the word "obedience.") Is there an effortless action in total accord with God's will? What happens to "me," the ego?

In this concept of obedience is already built a total inner harmony and integration which is Yoga. You want to do exactly what God or your Master wills, and when there is resistance this light turns full blast upon it and says, "What on earth are you doing here?" In that light, the resistance dissolves- there is effortless action and therefore motiveless which you can hold in your hand and go - the inner light is you! That is the "Lucifer" - the spirit of inquiry. Quest and quest and quest, go on questioning, leave nothing unquestioned forever.

Further comments and refs. by Father Terence:

1. The title "Satan" is post-biblical, given by the early church fathers. The ref. usually cited is Isaiah XIV, 12ff. "Satan" in the Old Testament given to mean "an accuser in a court of law, adversary." In later Jewish literature a heavenly officer or prosecutor whose function it is to question and test the genuineness of human virtue. Similar meaning in New Testament of Satan as adversary or stumbling block. E.g. Mark VIII, 33: Peter has become a stumbling block to Jesus and his mission, he can't accept the cross, therefore, in that context he is Satan. Paul refers to Satan disguising himself as an "angel of light" - 2 Cor. XI, 13ff. Also ref. Rev. XII, 7ff - Satan identified as the great dragon.

2. Having the light, it must be seen: Matt. V, 14-16; John XII, 35-36; Ephes. V, 8-9.

3. Christ the Light - John I, 8-12; IX, 5.

4. Christ the Light, obedient to the will of the Father: Phil. II, 5-8.

5. Christian prayer: "deliver us from evil (darkness)" - the recogition of the need for vigilance and prayer-2 Cor. XI, 14; 1 Peter V, 8; Matt. VI, 13.

This story from Srimad Bhagavatam translated by Swami Venkatesananda [Feb. 16-17] draws interesting and valid parallel to the story of the Fall of Lucifer.

THE STORY OF

JAYA AND VIJAYA

The body of all beings is the product of the elements.

And through ignorance, the false notions of "I" and "mine" are born. Then there arise feelings of pain and pleasure, honor and dishonor, praise and censure, etc. All these are absent in the Lord. Hence, he who fixes his mind on the Lord, whatever may be his intention, earns his grace. Many have become one with him by fixing their mind upon him through love, hate, fear, friendship and devotion. For instance, the gopi attained him through love, Kamsa through fear, Sisupala etc. through hate, and Vrsni by being related to him, you by friendship and we by devotion to him.

One day the sages Sanatkumara arrived at his abode and sought to enter. The Lord's attendants, Jaya and Vijaya, taking them to be mere boys, prevented them from doing so. The sages thereupon pronounced a curse upon Jaya and Vijaya: "You have lost your discrimination! Hence you are unfit to be here serving the Lord's lotus feet. Descend as demons." Later they mitigated the curse by granting: "You will return to your abode after three incarnations." Hence they were born as Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, Sisupala and Dantavakra. Purified by their whole-

hearted devotion to the Lord through enmity, they have returned to the Lord's abode as his attendants.

Part III

THE WORD

The Word

I am Who I am. I will be What I will be.

Exodus III, 14.

In truth, that energy of the infinite consciousness itself is...all, whatever is, was and ever will be.

Yoga Vasistha VI.i.45

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?... Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead...as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

James II, 14-17 & 26

The Man consists of his faith;

as a man's faith is, so is he.

Bhagavad Gita XVII.2

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matt. V, 44

Today I have seen the glory of the Lord's devotees: they do good even to those who have harmed them.

Srimad Bhagavatam IX.5

Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matt. V, 39

Bear insult, bear injury - this is the highest sadhana (spiritual practice).

Swami Sivananda

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Mark XII, 31

He who, through the likeness of the Self, sees "sameness" everywhere, be it pleasure or pain, he is regarded as the highest yogi.

Bhagavad Gita VI.32

Never hurt others' feelings

Swami Sivananda

Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Luke XXIII, 34

The demoniacal know not what to do and what to refrain from.

Bhagavad Gita XVI.7

When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or you kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you.

Luke XVI, 12-14

That gift which is given to one who does nothing in return, knowing it to be a duty to give in a fit (proper) place and time to a worthy person, that gift is held to be sattvic (pure).

Bhagavad Gita XVII.20

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light... But he who does what is true comes to the light.

John III, 20-21

That state which is night to all beings, to the self-controlled man is watchfulness; when all beings are awake, that is night for the sage who sees.

Bhagavad Gita II.69

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke XIV, 26

My devotees have abandoned their wives, children, houses, wealth and even their lives for my sake; how then can I forsake them?

Srimad Bhagavatam IX.4

Non-attachment, non-identification of the Self with son, wife, home and the rest, and constant even-mindedness on the attainment of the desirable and the undesirable...

Bhagavad Gita XIII.9

If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matt. V, 23-24

Reconciliation must be with the offended:

refer the Ambarisha story.

Srimad Bhagavatam IX.4-5

As the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.

Luke XVII, 22-24

With unequalled splendor he will fly swiftly across the sky, destroying millions of robbers in the disguise of rulers.

Srimad Bhagavatam XII.12

Watch therefore for you do not know when the master of the house will come...lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.

Mark XIII, 35-37

Arise, awake, having attained thy boons, understand (them). Sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to cross, difficult to tread is that path (so) sages declare.

Katha Upanishad I.3 xiv

God requires a faithful fulfilment of the merest trifle given to us to do, rather than the most ardent aspiration to things to which we are not called.

St. Francois de Sales

Better is one's own duty though destitute of merit than the duty of another well performed. He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no sin.

Bhagavad Gita XVIII.47

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke X, 30-37

The poor man looks upon others as his own self and understands their troubles and sorrows.

Srimad Bhagavatam X.10

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

Mark II, 17

Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and the rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself.

Bhagavad Gita IV.7

Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light.

Luke XI, 34

When through every gate (sense) in this body, the wisdom-light shines, then it may be known that Sattva is pre-dominant.

Bhagavad Gita XIV.11

It is a deadly sin (to wish to become a guru) don't get into that trap.

Swami Sivananda

You are not to be called "rabbi" for you have one teacher and you are all brethren... Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ.

Matt. XIII, 8 & 10

Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Luke X, 23-24

Neither the hosts of the gods nor the great sages know My origin; for in every way I am the source of all of them.

Bhagavad Gita X.2

Very hard indeed it is to see this form of Mine which thou hast seen. Even the gods are ever longing to behold it.

Bhagavad Gita XI.52

I and the Father are one.

John X, 30

So'ham: I am He.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

James IV, 14

Beings are unmanifested in their beginning, manifested in their middle state and unmanifested again in their end. What is there to grieve about?

Bhagavad Gita II.28

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Revelations XI, 23

Neither doth the sun illumine there nor the moon, nor the fire, having gone thither, they return not: this is my supreme abode.

That light which residing in the sun illumines the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire know that light to be Mine.

Bhagavad Gita XV.6 & 12

The sun shines not there, nor the moon and stars, these lightnings shine not, where then could this fire be? Everything shines only after that shining light. His shining illumines all this world.

Katho Upanishad II.2.xv

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AMEN *OM*